



Volume 34, Number 1 Winter 2022

The Cut Flower

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Cover photo courtesy of Springwell Gardens

The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

is published by
The Association of Specialty
Cut Flower Growers, Inc.
MPO Box 268, Oberlin, OH 44074

Judy Marriott Laushman, editor.
Linda Twining, layout.
2022 ASCFG
ISSN 1068-8013

PUBLISHING SCHEDULE ISSUE DEADLINE

Spring	March 1
Summer	June 1
Fall	September 1
Winter	December 1

All articles, features, and display advertising must be received by these deadlines for publication. *The Cut Flower Quarterly* welcomes advertising. Contact ASCFG for advertising insertion order form.

Contact Judy Laushman
(440) 774-2887 or mail@ascfg.org
www.ascfg.org

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I Can't Wait to See you Again — in Person!

Val Schirmer



Hello, everyone, and welcome to 2022! I'm more than a little excited—and feeling more than a bit intimidated—to be writing my first column as your new ASCFG President.

This organization is a HUGE reason that our little flower farm has been successful, and I've been very thankful to try to give back by serving as the Southeast Regional Director, and an active member of your board for the past five years.

In this time, I've been so pleased to see our Regional membership grow from 138 to nearly 450 people, and I'm totally astonished that our global membership has gone from fewer than 1,000 members five short years ago to more than 2,700 today. The ASCFG's greatest asset is our members, who include the finest flower farmers in the world!

I feel the amazing growth we're experiencing is a direct tribute to your association's leaders.

I've been able to see in person how your Board of Directors (who are all volunteers) and ASCFG staff (notably Executive Director Judy Laushman and Managing Director Linda Twining) have worked relentlessly to build on the Association's 30+ year heritage, working hard to create the best growers' association possible.

None of this is a cinch; after all, your board members are also full-time flower farmers and business owners, parents, partners, and caregivers. Yet, they set aside the time and effort at the end of their work days to participate in Zoom board and committee meetings (can't wait until we can reconnect to meet *in person* again) to move the ASCFG forward.

When I mentioned that I feel more than a bit intimidated coming into this role, it's because of the president I'm succeeding—Jennie Love.

Jennie's served on the board, first as Vice President and then as President, the entire time I've served as

Regional Director, *plus an additional four years before that!* Since the very first time I heard of her, I've been in awe of Jennie, who played a major role in putting the flower “farmer” together with “florist,” creating a new role in our flower world.

As President, she has pushed us to create our first-ever strategic plan—a major building block and road map for the ASCFG. It's posted on the ASCFG Members site, under Membership —> ASCFG documents. In fact, while you're at it, take a few hours this month to look at everything available to you on the site. It's a major benefit of your membership and you're cheating yourself if you don't take a look.

Also take a minute to get acquainted with the Board (you'll find us under Contact) and our responsibilities. Our terms are three years.

If you're not already following your board members on social media, please take a second and do that!

Executive Board

Val Schirmer, Three Toads Farm, Winchester, Kentucky — Brand spankin' new President (succeeding Jennie Love, Love 'n Fresh Flowers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Mimo Davis, Urban Buds City Grown Flowers, St. Louis, Missouri—Vice President

Lennie Larkin, B-Side Farm, Petaluma, California—Treasurer

Laura Beth Resnick, Butterbee Farm, Pikesville, Maryland—Secretary

John Dole, North Carolina State University, Raleigh—Executive Advisor (We're SO lucky to have him in this role!)

Regional Directors

Bailey Hale, Ardelia Farm & Co., Irasburg, Vermont—Northeast

Michelle Elston, Roots Cut Flower Farm, Carlisle, Pennsylvania—Mid-Atlantic

Linda Doan, Aunt Willie's Wild Flowers, Blountville, Tennessee—Southeast

Susan Rockwood, Arcola Trail Flower Farm, Stillwater, Minnesota—North and Central

Shanti Rade, Whipstone Farm, Paulden, Arizona—South and Central

Erin McMullen, Rain Drop Farms, Philomath, Oregon—West and Northwest

Janis Harris, Harris Flower Farm, St. Thomas, Ontario — Canada

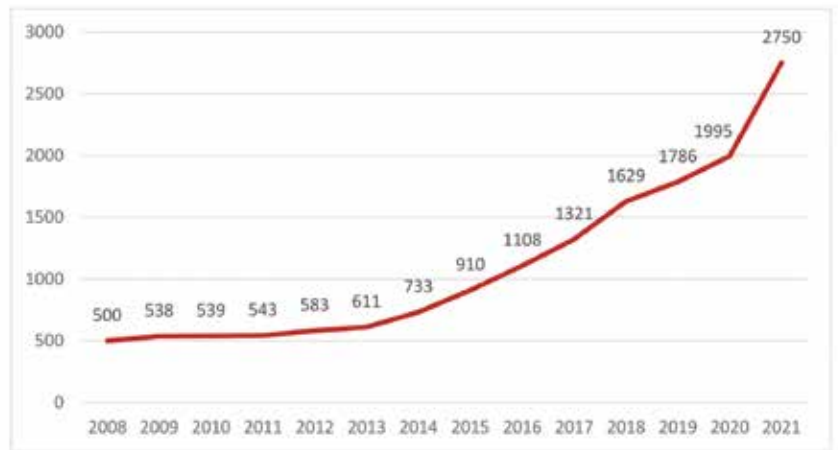
While at this brand new stage, it would be foolish for me to say what I plan to accomplish as your President, but I CAN tell you that I'll continue to do what I've tried to do as a Regional Director: connect people, share best practices and feedback, GO and SEE, meet people and see places *in person*, listen, keep learning, and then share what I see and hear.

Like Jennie and others on the board, I'm especially interested in our longtime members and learning how to keep them engaged and excited about being part of the ASCFG.

When I said that our greatest asset is our members—among the finest flower farmers in the world!—I feel it's our longtime members who hold an essential key to this. We never want to lose them—their influence, experience, knowledge and voice are vital. Yet, what can we offer them in exchange for what we, and our hundreds and hundreds of new members, ask of them? It's definitely something to put some work into.

The last two years have been exceptionally challenging for all of us, and amazingly rewarding for many of us, too. While we've learned a great deal about how to connect virtually, we also realize just how much we miss connecting *in person* ... and we hunger for the time when we can do that again.

ASCFG Membership Growth 2008 - 2021



We're on track to surpass 1,090 new members in 2021, eclipsing 2020's 644 record for new members — a big reason that retaining our experienced, seasoned growers is essential. We need the balance, perspective, knowledge and experience they bring.

For now, no matter the size of your business or how long you've been at it, this is a GREAT time to be a flower farmer. It's an even better time to be part of the ASCFG.

Let's stay in touch!

*Val Schirmer is founder of Three Toads Farm, Winchester, Kentucky.
Contact her at vschirmer3@gmail.com*



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Changes Ahead in 2022

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



Each year around this time, we like to look at what changes are on the horizon for our businesses in the coming year. If there is one thing that is true about being a small business owner, it's that change is constant. Here is a look at a few changes coming to our businesses in 2022.

Laura Beth: Here's our big change for 2022: we're moving our farm!

As Jascha and I approached the ten-year anniversary of our business, which also happens to be the same anniversary of finding each other in the melee of twenty-somethings, new questions unexpectedly surfaced. What if we had complete freedom to create what we envision? What if we bought our own land?

Once we saw the possibilities, we couldn't unsee them. Some of the issues we considered over many long conversations:

- Can we afford it? We crunched numbers, we made crop plans, and looked back at years past in Quickbooks. Jascha currently has an off-farm job; there is plenty of profit to spend on him as a full-time farm employee. We have built some wealth from our business profits and can afford a mortgage.
- Do we want to work together? The last time we worked full time on the farm together, our business was a baby and we barely knew what we were doing. So long as we can have lots of separate responsibilities, we feel good about going back in together.



• Will this be an issue with our landlords? Thankfully, we talked it over with them and got nothing but support and enthusiasm. We're relieved and grateful!

• Can we move our farm? This is the part that scares me the most. We have about two acres of perennials, plus two fancy heated greenhouses, and four unheated hoops. Our landlords may want to retain some of this, but if not, we have to take it all with us. It's doable—but it's a lot of work!

• Is there anything else we'd rather do? This was an opportunity for us to consider if farming is really for us. Now would be a good time to quit if we felt motivated by something else. But there is nothing else that gets us more excited than growing plants, working with our florists, building a great team, and enjoying farm life. So we're in it for the long haul!

The experience of looking for our farm during this hot real estate market has been harrowing—and that's a gentle way to put it. That said, one really lovely aspect to buying the farm is that we've chosen to do it with my parents. That means that when it gets stressful or tough, we have each other to lean on. The process has required us to be incredibly vulnerable about our dreams, fears, and goals, and made the four of us even closer!

It feels risky to write this now, as we haven't found our new farm, and all of this could change. In the wild real estate market of 2021, we knew we needed to start asking around publicly for leads on land. So the ranunculus corm is out of the bag, as it were!

I'll share much more about Butterbee 2.0 in *Quarterlys* to come. I'll do my best to be open about the challenges, the failures, and hopefully some wins. Right now, I feel like my life is drifting in the air. Hopefully it will have come back down to earth by the time I write next!

Ellen: We're Cutting Back our Wedding Schedule

Unlike Laura Beth, we don't have any HUGE changes planned. Each year we try to make changes that will better serve our customers and create a better quality of life for us as owners.

In 2022, we'll be doing fewer weddings overall. The weddings we do take will be small in size and will not include installations of any kind. This probably seems counter to everything we see in the world or weddings right now.

Everyone wants a flower-covered arch, floral chandeliers, floral backdrops for photo booths, and more. I get it. We've done lots of these installations over the years and they are always beautiful. They are also time intensive, staff intensive, and in many cases, high stress. They can also be wasteful as they require a huge amount of product that oftentimes gets composted (if we retrieve the flowers) or thrown away (if someone at the venue cleans up) after just a few hours. As I get older and our business matures, I have come to realize that I want less stress associated with my work. I also want fewer 18-hour days. Is that so wrong? Ha ha!

In 2021 we did 37 weddings. The majority of those had some installations associated with them and many included retrieval at the end of the night. This is all standard in the floral/wedding world. The challenge for us this past year was trying to do those types of weddings week in and week out while also trying to maintain our weekly subscription service that started with the onset of COVID. We do about 60-70 deliveries a week to subscribers. And assuming COVID gets better



sometime, we want to restart classes and other community events in the shop. Not to mention, the future projects we want to move the needle on. We can't do it all.

It's a little bit scary to make this change because I know that we'll be turning off a big group of potential customers. We have to figure out the best way to market our services to potential clients who are having smaller, more intimate weddings. It's also a little tricky because weddings bring in the most money of all of our offerings. These big-ticket events allow us to buy a large amount of flowers from our growers and keep our team working and creatively stimulated. We'll need to replace the income from weddings with more subscriptions, classes, and possibly new offerings. We'll also need to make sure our other offerings still interest our team, and provide opportunities to buy in large quantities from our local growers.

Doing smaller, less time-intensive weddings will allow us to provide better service to our wedding customers, continue our subscriptions, restart classes, work on new projects, and spend time doing other things outside of work like biking, hiking, traveling, and more. I am a big proponent of figuring out how your business can work for you rather than just you working for the business. It's worth taking the time to make your business work for you so that you can continue to enjoy it for years to come.



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Contact her at butterbeefarm@gmail.com*



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Insidious Flower Bug — a Friend to Flower Growers

Raymond Cloyd



Insidious flower bug (IFB), *Orius insidiosus*, adults are black, 2 to 5 mm long, and flattened, with distinctively patterned black and white wings (Figures 1 and 2). Females insert eggs into plant tissues, such as stems and leaves, and nymphs emerge (eclose) from the eggs. Nymphs are light brown, 1 to 2 mm in length, tear drop-shaped, with red eyes (Figure 3). There are five instars (immature stages). Both the nymphs and adults are predaceous.



Figure 1. Insidious flower bug adults (Raymond Cloyd, KSU)



Figure 2. Insidious flower bug adult (Raymond Cloyd, KSU)

The mean longevity of adult females is 26.1 days under laboratory conditions. The IFB is commercially available from most biological control suppliers and is widely used to regulate insect pest populations in greenhouse production systems affiliated with vegetables and ornamentals. In addition, they're relatively easy to rear under laboratory conditions for mass production.

The IFB is a generalist predator, with nymphs and adults feeding on a wide range of insect and mite pests including aphids, spider mites, thrips, and whiteflies. They can regulate populations of the western flower thrips, *Frankliniella occidentalis*, and two-spotted spider mite, *Tetranychus urticae*, when these two pests are present simultaneously. The IFB will feed on plant fluids, pollen, and nectar in the absence of prey. The nymphs and adult life stages feed on western flower thrips on plant leaves and flowers. Studies have shown that they can consume more than 20 western flower thrips per day. Furthermore, they can effectively regulate western flower thrips populations, either individually or when combined with other biological control agents. A benefit of releasing these bugs instead of the predatory mites *Neoseiulus cucumeris* and *Amblyseius swirskii*, is that IFB nymphs and adults feed on the mobile life stages (larvae and adults) of the western flower thrips. Predatory mites feed on only the 1st instars of western flower thrips. The IFB can effectively regulate western flower



Figure 3. Insidious flower bug fifth instar nymph (Nathan Herrick, KSU)

thrips populations in ornamental and vegetable crop production systems. After IFB are released as adults, the nymphs that emerge from the eggs are restricted to plants because they cannot fly. Consequently, the nymphs may provide additional regulation by feeding on western flower thrips (Figure 4).

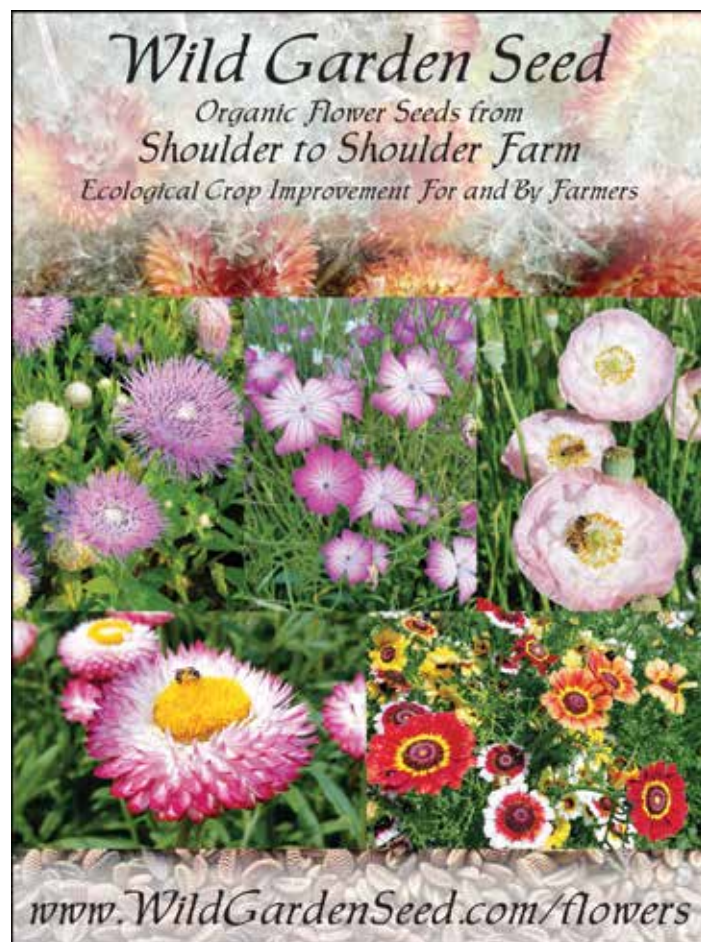


Figure 4. Fifth instar nymph of insidious flower bug feeding on western flower thrips adult (Nathan Herrick, KSU)

The IFB was initially thought to undergo a reproductive diapause in response to short (<12 hours) daylengths or photoperiods, which would influence its ability to effectively regulate western flower thrips populations from September through March. However, recent research in our laboratory at Kansas State University (Manhattan, KS) has demonstrated that IFB predation and female reproduction are not affected by short or long daylengths or photoperiods over the length of time required to produce a crop. Therefore, greenhouse producers can release IFB adults any time during the growing season, even from fall through winter.

Banker plant systems consist of non-crop plants, which provide alternate food sources (prey) for predators, as well as nectar that enhances establishment. 'Black Pearl' pepper, *Cap-sicum annum*, plants provide sufficient nectar and pollen that enhances development, fitness, and abundance of IFB adults. However, the highest population growth occurs on 'Purple Flash' pepper plants, which suggests that 'Purple Flash' may be a more suitable banker plant for use in greenhouses. The use of banker plants may improve the effectiveness of this predator when used in biological control programs designed to regulate western flower thrips populations.

Plant type may affect the ability of IFB nymphs and adults to sufficiently regulate insect and mite pest populations. For example, this insect does not establish on tomato, *Solanum lycopersicum*, plants, which results in minimal regulation of western flower thrips populations. The reason may be associ-



ated with searching or foraging behavior being hindered by glandular trichomes (hairs) on the leaves and stem of tomato plants, which may inhibit the ability of the IFB to effectively regulate insect or mite pest populations.

The insidious flower bug is a commercially available generalist predator that effectively regulates populations of western flower thrips. Therefore, greenhouse producers should consider releasing insidious flower bugs into greenhouse production systems as a component of a biological control program.

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*Reprinted with permission from GPN Greenhouse
Product News, November 2021.*

2021 ASCFG Seed Trial Report

John Dole and Judy Laushman



Every flower has a story and every story has a beginning. Many of the cut flowers we grow were brought into cultivation so long ago we no longer know how their stories started. Dianthus, stock, and snapdragons fall into that category. Native to various parts of Europe and the Middle East, these species were likely being cultivated before writing developed, and have been grown for centuries.

We know more of the story of the marigold. The Aztecs used it for ceremonies, decorations, and medicinal purposes, and began the selection and development process that led to it becoming such a popular plant. It caught the attention of Spanish invaders, who were looking for gold and found floral riches. They brought it back to Spain in the 1500's, and from there it was distributed around the world, including Africa and eastern Asia, and later to America, on the same continent from which it came. Meanwhile, in Mexico, marigold cultivation continued and the flower became associated with the Mexican holiday of Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). In the United States, the Burpee Company took notice of the marigold and began offering many improved varieties. In 1954, David Burpee made one of the most successful marketing moves in horticultural history by announcing that the company would pay \$10,000 for the first white marigold flower. The prize was claimed in 1975 by Alice Vonk of Sully, Iowa.

Fast forward to today and the marigold has gone from a stalwart bedding plant to one of the most important specialty cut flowers, a development not everyone is happy with due to its fragrant foliage—but that story can wait for another day. Which leads us to the cultivars in this year's Trial, one of which is called **'White Swan'** (AmeriSeed). Alas, 'White Swan' is not truly white, but a cream color, which many Trialers thought was great. One commented that "I couldn't get enough of this little gem, the color was a perfect cream yellow that matched just about anything you put it with." Another was more direct, exclaiming, "Loved it!!!"



'White Swan'

Photo Shannon Jones

'White Swan' produced an average of 6.4 stems per plant that were about 16 inches long, with some Trialers getting up to 3-foot stems. The downside was that its flowers are much smaller than the typical cut marigolds, and the plants were not as tall or vigorous.

The top-scoring marigolds in the Trial were **'Garuda Deep Gold'** (AmeriSeed) and **'Garuda Yellow Improved'** (AmeriSeed). They produced 7-8 stems that were 20-21 inches long. Plants were tall and reliably provided many large, full flowers in bright colors. One Trialer commented that 'Garuda Yellow Improved' was "our favorite marigold of the year, by far!" It should be noted that these cultivars, as well as all of the other marigolds, had a good postharvest life of 9 to 11 days.

Lisianthus has definitely made the big time as it is now one of the most important cut flowers in the industry. Its story starts in the south-central prairies of the United States and northern Mexico, where it is a relatively uncommon wildflower. Finding them in the wild is always a treat with their simple, but lovely five-petaled flowers. Just as plant explorers from the U.S. and Canada have brought back plants from other countries, Japanese plant enthusiasts noticed the lisianthus, and started growing and

developing it. The first cultivars were offered commercially in 1933. With their work and that of other breeders, the somewhat generic purplish-blue hue of the native lisianthus has become an astounding array of colors (from white to brown, including green and bicolors); flower sizes (from the tiny Doublini to full-size); flower shapes (bell or open); petal styles (simple or frilly); and petal numbers (from single to heavily doubled). It has steadily grown in popularity across all floral markets.



Lisianthus Medley

Photo Rachael Ackerman



Photo Jamie Sammons

ruffled” light pink flowers with a darker rose edge were well liked by many: “AMAZING COLOR. I will definitely be growing this variety again. The petal shape and color were stunning. There’s not much I don’t love about a lisianthus and this one exceeded my expectations.”

With a broad range of colors from green to dark purple or brown, almost any color can now be found in lisianthus, but orange is still unique. Alas, while ‘**Little Summer 1 Orange**’ (Gloeckner) had lovely flowers, they were not orange, but, as one Trialer put it so eloquently, “shades of rose, cream, and apricot”. Regardless, the color was well liked by many with one stating it was “wonderful and unique.” Note that this cultivar was one of the shortest in the Trial with stems averaging only 14 inches.

Another species that used to be regularly dissed for being difficult to grow is campanula. Growers have learned to navigate its quirks in order to produce long stems of striking bell-shaped flowers. It generally does best in tunnels or greenhouses when grown under cool temperatures and short days for a while, to get the plants up to size before flowers are initiated by long days. This year **campanula** ‘**Champion II White**’ (Sakata) was one of the top-scoring cultivars with 21-inch stems (up to 30 inches long for at least one Trialer) and an average of 4 stems per plant. It also had the longest



Photo Bob Wollam

What has also changed with lisianthus is the level of producers’ experience with it. When it was first introduced into the ASCFG Trial Program, few growers had knowledge of this sometimes finicky plant, resulting in low scores and justifiably cranky comments. Well, no more. ‘**Celeb 2 Madonna**’ (Gloeckner) was the top-scoring cultivar with an average of 3 stems per plant that were a respectable 19 inches long, although a couple of growers were able to harvest 30-inch stems. The “highly double, deeply

vase life of any species in the Trial, ranging from one to three weeks, with an average of 13 days. Comments from Trialers include, “This was an exceptional variety. Very well accepted by customers. Excellent vase life also; was a great performer in bridal bouquets.” and “Tall stems. Straight stems (even without netting). Multiple florets per stem. Easy to grow and harvest.”

Campanula’s life story illustrates the concept of “annualization”, which is the process of converting a true biennial or perennial to an annual crop through breeding or production methods. In this case, campanula originally required both long days and cold temperatures to flower, but breeders were able to create cultivars that require only long days. John has a special connection to this species in that two of his graduate students, Todd Cavins and Theresa Bosma, performed the research to work out the production and postharvest methods, thus paving the way for it to become a major cut flower.

The annual aster’s story starts in China (hence its other common name, “China aster”) where it was domesticated centuries ago into a stunning array



Photo Rachael Ackerman

of colors and flower shapes. With long, straight stems and an excellent vase life, annual aster became an important cut flower in many parts of the world, including the United States and Canada. However, issues with diseases and changing consumer tastes eventually led to decreased production. Both spray and single-stem types are available; the spray types have continued to be produced, especially overseas. Single-stem forms are most striking, and it is wonderful to see seven cultivars from American Takii and Sakata in the Trial. All performed well, yielding 6-7 stems per plant, with average stem lengths of 15-18 inches. Some Trialers reported stems up to 30 inches long. Our favorite was **'Azumi XL Red'** (Sakata) which was the tallest for us and had rich dark red flowers. Note that it was the last one to flower for us. The top-scoring cultivars overall were **'Azumi XL Rose'** (Sakata), **'Azumi XL Red'**, and **'Mum Deep Purple'** (American Takii). Regarding the latter cultivar, one Trialer said, "Highly uniform plants and blooms. Large blooms reached 2-3 inches wide. Dark purple color is attractive. Plants held up well during a hot spring and a very wet July/August". As with other species in this report, asters are modestly photoperiodic and perform best when grown in tunnels or greenhouses under 14+ hr long days for the first 4 to 5 weeks.

On one hand, **salpiglossis** seems like a prime candidate for cut flower fame, considering its large, multi-colored flowers that come in a wide variety of gorgeous colors. On the other hand, it can be a weak-growing plant, and the foliage is sticky, no fun for harvesters. Add the fact that



Aster cultivars
Photo Shannon Algieri



'Café au Lait' blends with other flowers.

Photo Shannon Jones

the name sounds like a part of your throat and it is no surprise that salpiglossis is rarely grown for cuts. So, it was with anticipation that we welcomed salpiglossis **'Café au Lait'** (Takii Europe) for 2021. The unique brown and yellow color was a focus of many of the comments and truly illustrates the cliché that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. One Trialer said, "I absolutely loved the color of this one, it went so well with the popular rusty hues that clients are asking for". Another stated emphatically, "UGLY brown color". Plants produced an average of 2.5 stems each, and while one grower got up to 17-inch stems, the average was about 12 inches. Trialers also commented on the sticky foliage and weak growth. What was interesting for us is that at least one Trialer mentioned growing other cultivars of salpiglossis: "Normally my salpiglossis does pretty decent and keeps sending up more blooms throughout the season." So, for those wanting a unique and beautiful flower, give salpiglossis a try!

One of the authors, John, has a long history with helichrysum. He was fascinated with them in seed catalogs. As a teenager, he grew and harvested them, and laboriously wired individual flowers, which he sold to a local florist. Fast forward to 2021 when we had two cultivars in the Trial. **'King Size**

Frosted Sulphur' (Takii Europe) was tall, productive, and vigorous. Trialers noted the unique flowers: silvery buds open to pale lemon-yellow to silver blooms. Trialers harvested an average of 5 stems per plant, which averaged 21 inches long. One recommended pinching when young to produce multiple stems that were not as thick as the main stem. The second helichrysum was **'Granvia Gold'** (Suntory Flowers), a cutting-propagated cultivar. While most folks thought it was too short, averaging only 12 inches long, the large bright yellow flowers were a hit.



'King Size Frosted Sulphur'

Photo Shannon Algieri



Photo Renee Clayton

With all the divisions in the world today it is not surprising that we have a few in the cut flower industry as well. It appears that the dianthus growers have settled into two camps—those who prefer the hybrid Amazon cultivars for their long, strong stems and heat tolerance, and those who like the traditional cultivars for their broad range of colors.

While all four cultivars in the Trial performed well, **'Amazon Lavender Magic'** (BloomStudio) was the top-scoring cultivar for all the reasons growers like the series. Plants produced an average of 7 stems each, which were 17 inches long. As with others with the "magic" name, flower clusters included individual florets ranging from pale to dark lavender pink. The top traditional dianthus was **'Sweet Neon Purple'** (BloomStudio), which actually had very similar stats to the 'Amazon Lavender Magic'. The vibrant fuchsia color appealed to many, but not all, as some thought it was hard to work with.

Celosia, snapdragons, stock, and sunflowers are staples of the specialty cut flower industry, and as with past years we had a number of each in the Trial. The highest-scoring celosia was **'Sunday Gold Improved'** (BloomStudio) with 17-inch stems (up to 30 inches for at least one Trialer) and 6 stems per plant. Growers loved the uniformity, strong growth, and beautiful gold color.

All the snapdragons did well, with **'Potomac Pink Dark'** (BloomStudio) getting top scores for strong stems, uniformly sturdy plants, and "Great shade of pink!". Very close behind was **'Maryland Rose'** (BloomStudio).

Both stocks scored well this year. This one-cut-and-done species produced 19–20-inch stems with some Trialers getting stems over two feet long. **'Canneto White'** (American Takii) was noted for its high percentage of doubles and full spikes. Trialers especially loved the color of **'Milla Light Pink'** (Evanthia); one wrote that "petals opened in a dusty rose shade and lightened to a delicate pink."

Two of the three sunflowers, **'Double Sunking'** (Takii Europe) and **'Sunrich Orange Summer DMR'** (American Takii) made it into the top ten for the Trial. Both typically produced one cut that averaged 3+ feet long on uniform, sturdy plants. 'Double Sunking' was noted for its "full and fluffy" double flowers, which one grower said were, "Very forgiving regarding harvest stage, which is great—they can be cut very tight or left to bloom more on the plant and still have a great vase life." 'Sunrich Orange Summer DMR' has a classic dark center and orange petals. The DMR stands for downy mildew resistant, which appealed to at least one Trialer, who wrote, "Disease resistance! Classic sunflower form with the addition of good plant health."

Based on the combined ratings score (market appreciation + repeat again + ease of cultivation), the top ten cultivars will be nominated for the ASCFG Cut Flower of the Year: Campanula 'Champion II White', Dianthus

'Amazon Lavender Magic', Marigold 'Garuda Deep Gold', Marigold 'Garuda Yellow Improved', Snapdragon 'Maryland Rose', Snapdragon 'Potomac Pink Dark', Stock 'Canneto White', Stock 'Milla Light Pink', Sunflower 'Double Sunking', and Sunflower 'Sunrich Orange Summer DMR'.

Interpreting the Trial results: The numbers reported are averages of all the respondents, and many factors will affect the success of any cultivar. Our participants grow and harvest trial plants using several methods. After looking at the average, check the range of responses listed below each number to see how the cultivar performed at its best and its worst. If the range of responses in the ratings is narrow and high, i.e., 3-5 or 4-5, the plant was a winner for most of the respondents and is likely to do well for you. The 'Grow Again Rating' is particularly important because it indicates if the Trialer would take the time, money, and space to actually grow the cultivar again. Review the trial results carefully. If a variety sounds interesting, but did not appear to do well, try it anyway; it may work well for you.

Acknowledgments: Thank you to each of the 20 evaluators who returned their Trial reports! We very much appreciate the time it takes to do the Trials. We want to especially thank Bob Wollam from Wollam Gardens for being the first Trialer to submit his evaluations! Thank you to the seed companies for providing the plant materials. In preparing the report we did a bit of editing of the comments for space and clarity; our apologies if we've altered the tone or content of anyone's comments. A special thanks to Jen Kalinowski for growing our transplants this year.

Photos: This year a number of our Trialers sent photos, including Rachael Ackerman, Shannon Algieri, Renee Clayton, Melissa Fischbach, Shannon Jones, Susan Miller, Jamie Sammons, Bob Wollam, and Susan Wright. Some were just spectacular, and we included as many as possible in this report. Thank you, thank you!



Photo Rachael Ackerman

Participating Trialers

Shannon Algieri

Stone Barns Center for Food
and Agriculture
Tarrytown, NY
Zone 7A

Linda Chapman

Harvest Moon Flower Farm
Spencer, IN
Zone 6

Renee Clayton

Wild Scallions Farm
Timberlake, NC
Zone 7

Connie Dam-Bijl

William Dam Seeds
Dundas, ON
Zone 5

John Dole

NC State University
Raleigh, NC
Zone 7b

Michelle Elston

Roots Cut Flower Farm
Carlisle, PA
Zone 6b

Jennifer Feddema-Gerryts

Wendalane Farms
Wellandport, ON
Zone 5

Melissa Fischbach

Wild Hollow Farm
Ashland, WI
Zone 4

Janet Foss

J. Foss Garden Flowers
Chehalis, WA
Zone 7b

Morgan Hopkins

Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers
St. Louis, MO
Zone 6b/7a

Barb Jewell

Island Meadow Farms
York, PEI
Zone 5b

Cathy Jones

Perry-winkle Farm
Chapel Hill, NC
Zone 6a

Shannon Jones

Broadfork Farm
River Hébert, NS
Zone 4b

Liz Krieg

Maple River Farm
Bethel, VT
Zone 4

Joy Longfellow

Johnny's Selected Seeds
Fairfield, ME
Zone 5a

Karen Pendleton

Pendleton's Country Market
Lawrence, KS
Zone 5b

Jamie Sammons

Jayflora Designs
Fonda, NY
Zone 5

Jen Syme

Syme Family Farm
Broad Brook, CT
Zone 5B

Bob Wollam

Wollam Gardens
Jefferson, VA
Zone 7a

Susan Wright

Shady Grove Farm
Vilas, NC
Zone 6



Photo Jamie Sammons

Participating Companies

American Takii

Salinas, California
www.takii.com

Takii Europe

De Kwakel, Netherlands
www.takii.eu

AmeriSeed

Lompoc, California
www.ameriseed.net

BloomStudios

West Chicago, Illinois
www.bloomstudios.com/en-us

Evanthia Seeds & Plants

Monster, Netherlands
www.evanthia.nl/en

Fred C. Gloeckner & Company

Harrison, New York
www.fredgloeckner.com

Sakata Seed America

Morgan Hill, California
www.sakata.com

Suntory Flowers

Westlake, Ohio
www.suntoryflowers.com

Summary of Comments. The number in the parenthesis is the number of Trialers who made the same comment. Comments from different individuals are separated by a “;”. Note: many respondents did not make specific comments on each cultivar and in a few cases, comments have been shortened because of limited space.

Aster ‘Azumi XL Blue’

(Sakata Seed America)

Good Qualities: Deep rich color (3); Nice fluffy heads; These Azumi asters grew taller and more prolific than the Chamois asters I usually grow, more usable stems, less prone to aster yellows disease, will definitely grow again!; Full flowers, fairly tall stems; Long vase life.

Problems: For blues, our customers prefer the traditional yellow-centered asters like Matsumoto; We had no success with this cultivar, plants were seeded early, bumped up into 50 cell trays, and, went into the ground big and healthy, we planted them in a high tunnel with the idea of extending harvest time in the fall, all were watered and fertilized regularly, despite our efforts, no plants grew beyond 6 inches in height and all died, after sitting in the ground, not growing, for months; Some had a lot of



‘Azumi XL Blue’
Photo Jamie Sammons



‘Azumi XL Red’
Photo Shannon Algieri

branching clustered at the top, preferred asters with elongated branching.

Similar Cultivars: ‘Standy’, ‘Fan’, ‘Gala’.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN.

Comments: We adored ‘Azumi White’ and would love to see a soft shell pink too, but the bright magenta (rose and red) and the purples were not as distinctive; We did not disbud and we got multiple shoots per plant. Flowers started with yellow centers and then turned into poms. We harvested with yellow centers; it was great to have these jewel-toned blossoms in our August market offerings, asters have such consistency in their production which is appreciated.

Aster ‘Azumi XL Red’

(Sakata Seed America)

Good Qualities: Beautiful jewel-toned color in August; Tallest aster we have grown, less prone to aster yellows disease; Long vase life; Tallest of the six asters in the Trial.

Problems: We had no success with this cultivar, plants were seeded early, bumped up into 50 cell trays and went into the ground big and healthy, we planted them in a high tunnel with the idea of extending harvest time in the fall, all were watered and fertilized regularly, despite our efforts, no plants grew beyond 6 inches in height and all died, after sitting in the ground, not growing, for months; Yellowing and dying back

leaves; Red was not the most popular color; Last one to flower of the six in the Trial.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN; refrigeration after harvest.

Comments: None listed.

Aster ‘Azumi XL Rose’

(Sakata Seed America)

Good Qualities: Beautiful color (2); Had the best stem and branching stem stretch, tallest aster we have grown, less prone to aster yellows, would definitely grow again and ditch the other aster types we grow that always get diseased and are too short; Consistent bloom size, good strong stems which hold the blooms upright, no disease issues, vigorous plants, excellent bouquet addition, a favourite; Long vase life.

Problems: We had no success with this cultivar, plants were seeded early, bumped up into 50 cell trays and went into the ground big and healthy, we planted them in a high tunnel with the idea of extending harvest time in the fall, all were watered and fertilized regularly, despite our efforts, no plants grew beyond 6 inches in height and all died, after sitting in the ground, not growing, for months.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN (2); Refrigeration between harvest and use; Keep stems harvested, when harvested fully open the vase life is shorter, especially in warm weather.

Comments: Less clumpy branching at the top of the flowering portion; We did not disbud, allowed more stems per plant: The asters were excellent this year, I did not disbud due to lack of time, we did, however, pinch the central stem prior to going out to the cold frame, they were field grown, no irrigation, began producing late July from an April 13 sowing, the growing season suited them along with lack of disease or insect worries, this colour was useful, nice and bright and preferred it to the red in this series, having dealt with disease in previous years it was a delight to have some positive results this year, we did have a long harvest window from this



Aster Harvest
Photo Jamie Sammons

variety, I did not count in the shorter stems we harvested in the above numbers, a good aster for us and would grow again if seed should become available, I often wonder if some of the aster problems I've encountered in previous years could have been related to seed-borne diseases.

Aster 'Azumi XL White'

(Sakata Seed America)

Good Qualities: The flowers are sitting nicely facing upward on strong stems, the white bloom has some yellow undertones showing more yellow as it matures, this was a good producer and our #2 fav aster in the trial, good vase life and repeat blooms, free from disease, healthy strong foliage, worked well in bridal bouquets; Bigger, fluffier heads than the ones we usually grow (Bonita, Matsumoto, Fujimi), nice bright, clear white, perfect for wedding work, no disease; Tallest mum we grow, white color is an easy sell to florist, less prone to disease; Long vase life.

Problems: None; We had no success with this cultivar, plants were seeded early, bumped up into 50 cell trays and went into the ground big and healthy, we planted them in a high tunnel with the idea of extending harvest time in the fall, all were watered and fertilized regularly, despite our efforts, no plants grew beyond 6 inches in height and all died, after sitting in the ground, not growing, for months; White tended to brown quickly.

Similar Cultivars: Somewhat similar to 'Gala', 'Standy', 'Matador' but the white is way cleaner and brighter.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN; Refrigeration.

Comments: This was a really productive aster which we harvested almost daily, field grown no irrigation, I would suggest harvesting regularly, older blooms will shatter easily, frequent harvest and support netting recommended, all the asters in the trial were exceptionally healthy this season—a combination of ample rainfall, cool temps in July, and lack

of insects and disease. Looking forward to growing again as seed becomes available, a very useful aster; Did not disbud which allowed more flowers per plant; We will definitely grow 'Azumi White' again!

Aster 'Large Flower Light Blue'

(American Takii)

Good Qualities: Great color (5); All staff members loved this aster, I think we harvested every available stem in the field, even the shorter side shoots were used in small bouquets (I did not include the shorter side stems in the marketable stem count), bloom size and stem length, together with excellent vase life; Fluffy petals; Plants were uniform and healthy; Robust grower; Long vase life.

Problems: Was a bit of an odd blue, we grow a ton of asters, prefer traditional dark purple (=blue) or more blue/lavender shade (=light blue), wanted more branching multi-cuts; As blooms opened, individual ray petals fold out and backward at the tips, giving a distinct look that I have not seen in other aster varieties, they look a little messy or windblown, especially when compared to the Tower series, where the ray petals all curl in one direction; Branching is a bit too clumpy around the flowering top; Did not survive; Too short, recommend as a hoophouse crop, one stem cut meant a cluster of flowers, but not productive enough in field; Struggled more than the other six in the Trial.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: Harvest when ready, keeping older flowers removed greatly extends the number of usable stems available, harvest into clean water after stripping and sorting stems, store in #2 grower solution in cooler for up to 5 days; Refrigeration.

Comments: This was #1 staff favourite in the Trial this summer, in fact all the Trial asters were outstanding, the best we have had for many years, the bloom size was excellent for bouquet work, I did grow a few in the hoophouse, however, I did not see any difference apart from a slightly longer stem, the light blue was a bit more compact than the others in the Trial, they were sown on April 13 in 144 cells, transplanted to 50 cells and then to the field June 8, we did pinch all of the asters, they were grown in the field through black bio, no irrigation, netting a must, they produced well for us from late July through early September. I did not have any insect or disease issues as we have had most years—in fact, I was almost ready to quit growing asters altogether, I think the combination of weather/ample rainfall and good seed and always good luck made it possible, every year is different, I hope this seed will be on the market soon, a welcome addition, I did not "disbud" due to limited time, they were pinched only once, removing the central stem around 2 weeks before transplanting in field; Grew in high tunnel, I always avoid asters/*Callistephus* due to aster yellows and *Fusarium*, but had decent results with these; This variety bloomed at the same time as 'Mum Flower Shape Deep Red', but earlier than 'Mum Flower Shape Deep Purple' in our trials; Germinated seeds were bumped up into

50 trays to allow plants to develop into big, strong, healthy plugs before transplanting, despite this effort, almost all plugs died very soon after transplant into a high tunnel, disappointing.

Aster ‘Mum Flower Shape Deep Purple’

(American Takii)

Good Qualities: Great blue/purple color (6); Nice fluffy flowers; Highly uniform plants and blooms, large blooms reached 2-3 inches wide, plants held up well during a hot spring and a very wet July/August; Good strong stems held upright, long bloom window; Long vase life.

Problems: Did not survive; Wish side shoots were long enough to cut multiple stems, we still harvested it as a single plant, like we do with more compact varieties; Flowered short, in a cluster, got a few single stems and then middle cluster, would be better in a hoophouse. *Similar Cultivars:* None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigeration after harvest (2); CVBN; Keep harvested, do not let flowers get over mature, store in #2 grower solution in cooler no more than 4 days for optimum vase life.

Comments: Grew in high tunnel, I always avoid asters/*Callistephus* due to aster yellows and *Fusarium*, but had decent results with these; Germinated seeds were bumped up into 50 trays to allow plants to develop into big, strong, healthy plugs before transplanting, despite this effort, almost all plugs died very soon after transplant into a high tunnel, disappointing; We had an unseasonably dry June, it's possible the mum-flowered ones would have been taller with longer side shoots in a more normal growing season (although all our annuals are on irrigation); Everyone loved this aster, the rich purple is always a welcome addition to bouquets, they were not disbudded due to lack of time, pinched out central stem only prior to going to cold frame, field grown no irrigation, support netting a must, this was a good one for us, would recommend and grow again should seed become available.

Aster ‘Mum Flower Shape Red’

(American Takii)

Good Qualities: Dark cherry-red blooms were attractive (4); Highly uniform plants and flowers, fully double, productive plants held up well during a hot spring and a very wet July/August; Great fluffy blooms, truly did look like a spring-blooming mum; 2-inch flowers; Long vase life.

Problems: Did not survive; Harvest whole plant, only one cut, wish side shoots were longer for multi cuts, too bright for spring, would want to grow later in summer next time; None.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: Cool.

Comments: Grew in high tunnel, I always avoid asters/*Callistephus* due to aster yellows and *Fusarium*, but had decent results with these; This variety bloomed about 10 days earlier than ‘Mum Flower Shape Deep Purple’ in our trials, while the varieties appeared very comparable in bloom form and plant habit, there was a noticeable difference in days to maturity; Germinated seeds were bumped up into 50 trays to allow plants to develop into big, strong, healthy plugs before transplanting, despite this effort, almost all plugs died very soon after transplant into a high tunnel, disappointing; We had an unseasonably dry June, it's possible the mum-flowered ones would have been taller with longer side shoots in a more normal growing season (although all our annuals are on irrigation)

Campanula ‘Champion II White’

(Sakata Seed America)

Good Qualities: Beautiful, pure white bloom (3); Tall stems (2); Straight stems (even without netting) (2); Easy to grow (2); This was an exceptional variety, very well accepted by customers, excellent vase life also was a great performer in bridal bouquets; Multiple florets per stem, easy to harvest; Blooms easily, blooms fast, easy to germinate; 5-day germination rapid growth on sturdy plants, 4-inch spacing in tunnel, fabulous smaller blooms in large numbers per stem, long-lasting stem.



Photo Shannon Jones

Problems: White flowers readily show water/weather damage (2); I struggled with getting the seeds germinated, I had only about a 50% success rate but that might have been something I wasn't doing right on my end; Not really a problem but something to be mindful of—do not let them become root bound, restricting the root system will lead to short stems; ZERO.

Similar Cultivars: Similar to other florist campanula.

Postharvest Recommendations: Harvest when several blooms are open, keeps exceptionally well in cooler for long period, 2 weeks +; CVBN; Keep bells from getting squished while in cooler.

Comments: I've never grown campanula before but I loved this flower and I think the designers loved it more, you can never have enough good white options for wedding designers! and I ended up getting smaller side shoots after cutting the main stem off (probably not cutting it deep enough) which was also grabbed up by them; This was an excellent plant for us this year, we started in the greenhouse, great germination and was grown in a hoophouse (recommended), I have tried growing in the field and I would not

recommend this, hoophouse/tunnel only, we tagged a few of our CSA bouquets that contained this campanula and asked our members to give us feedback, it was the same result from everyone—customers loved it! vase life was exceptional, although there were many great seed varieties in the 2021 Trial, this one is top 3, I did sow it again in August with hopes of getting it to the hoophouse for a fall crop, although it germinated well, regrettably I was too busy to get it in the ground, I would try this again next year and make sure it is planted in timely fashion, highly recommend this one, a winner; For us, this was the rock star of the ASCFG Trial! it was absolutely loved by employees and customers alike, and far out-competed our other campanula that was planted much earlier! stems were tall and straight, with multiple florets per stem, absolutely beautiful! we planted in a high-tunnel in the later part of spring and did very little other than water it, and it did wonderfully, we would absolutely grow again! plants sent up one main stem that always exceeded 2 ft. in height, followed by multiple, smaller, sub stems per plant, these sub stems were generally just over a foot in height, we LOVE Campanula ‘Champion II White’!!!; Typically I am not a fan of campanula but this one I liked, it was a great addition to our early summer market bouquets, customers liked it; This was my favorite Trial plant this season, I was leery to plant it because I’ve never done well with campanulas from seed, and especially planting so late, I usually do plugs and set them out in November or December, these germinated well and grew well and bloomed well, while they weren’t as bushy and big as our November plugs, they bloomed right after they finished, and they were very nice, and easy to manage, and we grew some outside, and they were awesome, I say that because I’ve had good luck in the past growing them only in a high tunnel or protected; After first harvests, we went through a very rainy period with high humidity and the plants quickly got diseased and then totally melted down quite quickly; WINNER WINNER CHICKEN DINNER!

For us, campanula ‘Champion II White’ was the rock star of the ASCFG Trial! It was absolutely loved by employees and customers alike, and far out-competed our other campanula that was planted much earlier! Also: WINNER WINNER CHICKEN DINNER!

Celosia ‘Act Diva’ (Evanthia)

Good Qualities: Unique burnt red/orange color (5); Very fast to mature and easy to grow, no leaf spots; Sturdy, definitely we will grow this again; Tight curl within the fan-shaped form; This was a good celosia as it did not get ridiculously large, the stem stayed nice and slim and the bloom remained happily on the plant, I was often asked about them in the field, I think they would also be worth testing as a tall bedding plant, the bloom is resistant to weather and upright on strong stems, might have been a bit large for average bouquets, however, it was often chosen by customers to be adding into their bouquet, a healthy plant no disease issues; Good germination of seed.

Problems: Short stems (3); Despite being planted in

a high tunnel, this cultivar never grew beyond three or so inches tall, then, when harvested, they would flop over, rendering the cut absolutely useless; Our customers were not as excited about color, but it would be good for certain design work, especially the “moody, fall” look; Large head, too large for market bouquets, we tried to sell them by the stem instead; After transplanting, the seedlings never grew; Some stems were stocky, shorter than other celosias we grew; Okay color, though there are better ones out there that have clearer shades; one stem cut, not very strong.

Similar Cultivars: Neo series.

Postharvest Recommendations: Dried flower; Keep water very clean, we do not store in cooler, recut stems often.

Comments: We love the Act series! wish the seed was cheaper, I’d try this one again late fall for its color; Not crazy about this variety; Love this; This was a very uniform variety, often with the larger celosias they tend to be irregular, ‘Act Diva’ was very consistent for bloom size, also held up to very strong winds without netting whereas many others would succumb to wind, this was one of the top ten for us in the 2021 Trial, would grow again; We made the mistake of pinching back the main shoots early on and there was absolutely no regrowth; I am a little baffled at what happened with these, the seedlings looked so good, then they just sat in their row and languished.



‘Act Diva’

Photo Rachael Ackerman



Celosia 'Sunday Gold', 'Sunday Bright Pink Imp', 'Sunday Yellow Imp', Reprise Violet, 'Act Diva'

Photo Rachael Ackerman

Celosia 'Reprise Velvet'

(Evanthia)

Good Qualities: The dreamiest color of cockscomb! (7), bright vibrant orange, velvety blooms or beautiful dark velvety burgundy purple color (*Editors' note: Trialers described the color quite differently.*); Good germination (2); Very tall (2); Straight stems (2); Also, as the nights got cooler, I noticed some side shoots had more of a soft coral color, fast to bloom, maximum uniformity, great head size, incredible!; Very fast to bloom, vigorous stems, no disease (leaf spots); We will try a late seeding for fall bloom next season; Easy to grow; Strong stems; Nice tidy size stem, slender but strong, would make a good back border bedding item, great in large arrangements especially in autumn, very uniform size, colour, and bloom time.

Problems: On the shorter side (3); A small portion (10%) had a seedier look to them where the seeds were more visible further down the neck of the cockscomb (this is a common problem in many varieties), I wish the seed were cheaper; After transplanting, the plants just languished; Despite be-

ing planted in a high tunnel, this cultivar never grew beyond three, or so, inches tall, then, when harvested, the neck would flop over, rendering the cut absolutely useless; None!; Head size was too hard to incorporate into market bouquets, we sold by the stem instead; Variability of stem length among plants; Not sturdy; Color is a brownish red, yucky tone, one stem cut then it is done.

Similar Cultivars: Bombay.
Postharvest Recommendations: Stored in our cool cellar rather than cooler, which is a bit warmer; Do not put in cooler, we keep ours quite cold and celosia, like zinnias, does not appreciate the cooler temperatures, important to change water often and recut stems.
Comments: If the seed were cheaper, I'd grow millions of them!; Harvest on time, the color fades to brown quickly; A single plant of this variety bloomed, had 4 flowers, they were lovely, but all the other plants just sat in their row—they didn't even die, just didn't grow or flower, still a little baffled with these; Disappointed, as I was looking forward to having this color of celosia going into the autumn months, germinated easily, but never grew; Superior to other burgundies we've grown in vigor and disease resistance; Celosias often don't do super well in our climate, though this year was better than many others for them; We made the mistake of pinching back the main leader stem after transplanting: no regrowth!; We liked this one, but liked 'Act Diva' better for its coppery colour, the 'Reprise Velvet' was more common, it had the same good qualities as the Act, and was perhaps had a bit larger bloom, to avoid any issues of

being root-bound, I delayed planting until May 21, they were planted in the field, no irrigation June 20, bloom time was similar to the 'Act Diva', very uniform.

Celosia 'Sunday Bright Pink Improved'

(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Great bright pink color (6); I used this color more than I thought I would, great for summer bouquets and even got it to blend into fall-themed bouquets too, great addition to the farm; Popular at farmers' market, good fast germination of seed; Good branching; Multiple cuts per plant; Such a robust prolific bloomer; This one was my favourite colour in the series—a bit later to bloom compared to the other colours but worth the wait, also several inches taller than the other varieties, 'Bright Pink' is a welcome filler addition to market bouquets, easy to germinate and grow, no insect issues; I grouped the Sunday cultivars together because they all had similar characteristics, 'Bright Pink' was our favorite, already ordered more seed for next year, our employees called it Bubble Gum Pink, this was the most popular color; Very uniform plants and bloom shape, contained, upright plants are productive, sturdy straight stems, easy to harvest and process; We loved this flower, color popped in straight bunches, set off bouquet colors beautifully.

Problems: Sunday Series tend to be on short side (3); Relatively short harvest window, 1 month; This variety was slower to mature compared to other Sunday varieties by 7-10 days; None.

Similar Cultivars: 'Sunday Bright Pink' (2); we grew this side-by-side with regular 'Bright Pink', which has been available for several years, I was under the impression that this was an improved variety, but could tell absolutely no difference, perhaps it is the original same seed?
Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigeration; Keep water clean, do not store in cooler if below 45F, harvest early or late in day; Placed in Hydraflor, then FloraLife, then cooler.

Comments: If only the Sunday celosias kept blooming, I would have loved them, as it was, I enjoyed harvesting

*If only the Sunday celosias kept blooming,
I would have loved them—as it was,
I enjoyed harvesting for a month and
all too soon the plants fizzled.*

for a month and all too soon the plants fizzled; Such a bright pink, hard to work with in arrangements but as single-stem bouquets midsummer, it was popular at our farmstand sales; This was a top ten for us this year, employees and customers appreciated the bright colour and texture, unfortunately, we had a damaging wind storm in early September caused it to topple over leaving much of the crop unusable, the others all remained upright, would recommend planting in a sheltered spot if possible, a hoop or tunnel would be ideal, will be field growing again next season, as with the other celosia I sowed the seed later, May 28 and set out to the field in less than 4 weeks to keep actively growing, preventing root growth severely effects the stem length; first harvest good, second harvest too short, good color; Absolutely loved the 'Bright Pink Improved'!

Celosia 'Sunday Gold Improved'
(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Amazing gold color (5); Shapely flower heads, good germination of seed and strong seedling growth; Really stood out in the field, loved it for fall creations; Multiple cuts per plant; Uniform plants and uniform plume shape; Reliable upright growth; Strong and tall, good side shoots even without pinching, no disease; I grouped the Sunday cultivars together because they all had similar characteristics; A bit longer stems than 'Sunday Yellow'.

Problems: Only a month harvest window; Sunday series tend to be on the shorter side; We planted in May and the gold was more of a fall tone; None.

Similar Cultivars: 'Sunday Gold'.

Postharvest Recommendations: Placed

in Hydraflor, then FloraLife, then cooler.

Comments: The color is great—bold and attractive (3); This was a crew favorite for the color, and for how it stood out in mixed bouquets; Ease of growing and popularity at the farmstand sales; We will definitely try this one again at a later planting date for September harvest; first planting was acceptable, second planting too short!

Celosia 'Sunday Green'
(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Pliable, soft lime shade (4); Green paired well with most color combos (2); Germinated easily, large, full, flower plumes; Tall stems with usable side shoots, unpinched, nice

feather plume form, full head; Very nice shape; Good fast germination; Makes a good filler; The muted color makes it a valuable element for events work, great upright growth; I grouped the Sunday cultivars together because they all had similar characteristics; Good length.

Problems: Any secondary shoots (branching after initial cut) grew to only 1-3 inches long, making this a "one and done" cultivar; Sunday series just don't get as tall as I would like; Our super-market customers prefer deeper, more saturated colors; Got some kind of disease in the field, spots all over foliage, keep in mind we had 30 inches of rain in an 8-week period!; Green was our least favorite color of the Sunday cultivars; Insipid green color, shows age fast, just not a satisfying color shade compared to other Sundays.

Similar Cultivars: 'Sylphid', but Sunday is more vigorous.

Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigeration.

Comments: Though this cultivar was easy to germinate and grow, and the initial cuts from the plants were nice and tall (enough), with a nice color and large flower, I likely wouldn't grow



Celosia Sunday

Photo Jamie Sammons

again, as we did not get the branching and subsequent cuts off of each plant as we do with the other celosia varieties that we grow; I think with pinching, this may produce many tall and wonderful shoots; Nice shape, but none sold, this color is out of vogue; A little too muted flower color for sale of straight bunches; Made a good filler, germinated and grew well, did have some spotting on leaves, possible cause excessive rainfall and lack of sun, may be happier in a hoop or tunnel, sowed May 28 and transplanted from a 50-count cell to bio plastic, no irrigation, stems stayed upright without netting, later in the season we added stakes and 2 rows of string to help keep from sprawling over the edge of the beds, easy to grow; first planting was acceptable, second planting too short!

Celosia ‘Sunday Purple Improved’ (BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Really nice clear plum flower color (5), that stood alone or set off any flower it was mixed with; Good, fast germination of seed; Reliably upright stems; I grouped the Sunday cultivars together because they all had similar characteristics, but we found that this one went by faster than the others; Sent up multiple side shoots on each stem; Sturdy stems, uniform and upright plants; Easy to grow, good bouquet filler; Center cut was gorgeous, nice head form and size.

Problems: Too short (2), but still usable; Relatively short harvest window, 1 month; Stem length decreases after first harvest; Sunday series don’t get as tall as I would like even after pinching; Weaker than others; Plants were slightly shorter compared to other Sunday varieties; We did not pinch this at planting, and there were no harvestable side shoots, would like to try pinching next time, otherwise cost of seed is not justified for single cut plant; Real spindly, ratty looking, useless.

Similar Cultivars: ‘Sunday Purple’, We saw little difference from ‘Sunday Cherry’.

Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigeration; Keep water clean and recut stems often, we do not store in cooler, does not appreciate cold temps.

Comments: I found this cultivar was taller than expected, height and bloom times were consistent through the series except for the pink, which was a little taller and later to bloom than the other colours in the series.

Celosia ‘Sunday Yellow Improved’ (BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Beautiful bright yellow color (2); Nicely shaped flower head, good seed germination; This was a good filler, we didn’t tend to use it as much, preferring the deeper ‘Sunday Gold’ instead; Reliably upright stems; I grouped the Sunday cultivars together because they all had similar characteristics, ‘Yellow’ was nice; Good length on initial cut, easy to germinate and grow; Plants were vigorous, healthy and tall; This variety had more “fluffy” heads than the other feathery Sunday series, still a plume shape, but more frizzy; we liked its uniqueness, nice clean green foliage.

Problems: Relatively short harvest window, 1 month; Any secondary shoots (branching after initial cut) grew to only 1-3 inches long, making this a “one and done” cultivar; Sunday Series tend to be too short even after pinching; Dull and muddy color; Bloom shape was not uniform, plants bloomed in a range of irregular shapes, from plumes to crests, color tone also varied across this variety, thick stems were harder to harvest and bunch compared to other Sunday varieties, most of the Sunday varieties performed very well for us this year—this variety seems to be an outlier; Was slower to mature than all other Sunday varieties planted at the same time, oddly, this particular variety was very hard to strip (stems had better adhesion?).

Similar Cultivars: ‘Sunday Yellow’

Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigeration.

Comments: Produced well from late July through early to mid-September, wet weather in September caused some browning and fading on the blooms, perhaps consider a hoop or tunnel for this series of celosia especially if the area is prone to excessive rainfall, a good healthy plant, sown May 21 and planted to field from 50-cell count, no irrigation

or support netting, string support was used on outer perimeter to keep plants upright; Although this cultivar was easy to germinate and grow and the initial cut yielded a stem of good usable length, I likely would not grow this cultivar again simply because we were not able to get the subsequent cuts from it that we get from our other celosia varieties; The color is great, and the plant vigor and height were also good, but the wide range of plume shapes and thick stems made this variety difficult to harvest; I think if we grew a large quantity of this variety, we’d notice a big difference in time required to harvest due to difficulty stripping stems; Tall, non-typical to the others, soft, baby yellow in color.

Dianthus ‘Amazon Lavender Magic’ (BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Great colour (6), useful for blending in bouquets, especially because of the changing bloom colour; Strong stems (4); Tall stems (2); Prolific (2); Blooms over a long period of time (2); Long vase life; Cut and come again, good market flower, sold on its own; Vigorous and healthy plants, very uniform and full 2 to 4-inch wide blooms; Reliably upright stems and plants, beautiful flower shape.

Problems: Too short (2); Perhaps grown in hoop or tunnel would add more stem length, like all dianthus stripping stems is tedious, as each leaf needs to be removed one at a time, if this is not done carefully the stems will snap easily, this is not directed to this cultivar but to all cut flower dianthus in general.

Similar Cultivars: I thought it was fairly similar to ‘Amazon Rose Magic’, there was definitely a lavender hue to the mix of colours in the flower head but you had to look closely, on a quick glance you wouldn’t think there was any difference between the two; Performance is consistent with other varieties in the Amazon series.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN; Refrigeration.

Comments: Rain was really detrimental to this plant, probably better grown indoors; Nice pink and white bicolor, although not lavender at all as the name



'Amazon Lavender Magic'

Photo John Dole

spreading, the Amazon series had none of these problems, I found that interesting! will stick with my Amazon series!

Dianthus 'Sweet Neon Purple'

(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Colour—so bright!!! (6); Small size of flower heads made them good for market bouquets; Prolific, providing multiple cuts per plant; Good market flower, sold on its own; Same great plant habit and bloom time as rest of Sweet series; Nice stems, good production, blooms a long time, great for mixed bouquets; Tall, vigorous and healthy plants, very uniform blooms; Reliably sturdy, upright stems, great stem stretch, early bloomer.

Problems: Not as tall as other varieties of dianthus grown, though each plant did produce multiple successive stems following the first cut, they got increasingly shorter and thin/flimsy, stems broke easily, though this is true of all dianthus; I am a diehard Amazon dianthus grower, the Sweet series did not impress me, shorter and much smaller headed blooms than what I am used to growing, had a lot of rot of blooms due to our 30 inches of rain over the growing season, but that happened to all of our field-grown dianthus varieties; Shorter, hard to put into bouquets because of stem length, colors can be very vibrant and hard to work into color palettes, more of a market flower, not a good event flower because of bright color combos; I had a

would imply, nice large heads; I think these dianthus are more suited to spring or fall crops as they seemed to mind the heat, causing them to mature quickly, we grow the biannual Sweet William and use a lot of this flower early in the season, with the time-consuming stem stripping, we are more likely to look for another flower instead, this dianthus would make a good bedding plant with some regular deadheading; Nice to have a flower marketable as decor and edible; Performed the best of all the varieties of dianthus! good germination success, produced multiple stems per plant and, more importantly, these secondary stems remained tall and thick/sturdy, grown in a high tunnel.

flower, not a good event flower because of bright color combos, rain was detrimental to the blooms, probably better grown indoors; I am a diehard Amazon dianthus grower, the Sweet series did not impress me, shorter and much smaller-headed blooms than what I am used to growing, had a lot of rot of blooms due to our 30 inches of rain over the growing season, but that happened to all of our field-grown dianthus varieties.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigeration.

Comments: This color is a gorgeous addition to the Sweet series; We grew it in a covered greenhouse, we love it and it was worthy of greenhouse real estate!;

Dianthus 'Sweet Cherry'

(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Beautiful rich red color (5), almost a neon red, which at first I didn't like but with the yellow gold of sunflowers it looks great; Long stems, large blooms; Good market flower sold on its own; Large main marketable stem to harvest, and then 3-5 smaller side shoots; Uniform plants and flowers; Sturdy, reliably upright stems; Small size of flower heads made them good for market bouquets.

Problems: Shorter, hard to put into bouquets because of stem length, colors can be very vibrant and hard to work into color palettes, more of a market

Dianthus 'Sweet Neon Purple' really lives up to its name, shining from across the garden, our staff fell in love with it immediately: it added cheer during a rainy week.

Grew in a high tunnel; Had all of my Sweet trial growing right next to all of our Amazon series in the field in many succession plantings, lost a lot of the Sweet series as young plants (not flowering yet) due to the excess moisture, also some developed odd foliage spotting, we ripped a lot of those out for fear of

hard time getting a nice stem, I found I had to pick extremely early with hardly any colour showing otherwise some of the florets would look damaged, not sure if this was because of weather or that they just age quicker, I had it growing in the same row as the Amazon dianthus and have never had that problem with



'Sweet Rose Magic'

Photo Jamie Sammons

that variety, the stems were also shorter than my Amazon plants; The very bright bloom color can be challenging to pair with other, softer springtime colors.

Similar Cultivars: Dianthus 'Amazon Purple'.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN; Refrigeration.

Comments: This variety really lives up to its name, shining from across the garden, our staff fell in love with it immediately: it added cheer during a rainy week; Had all of my Sweet trial growing right next to all of our Amazon series in the field in many succession plantings, lost a lot of the Sweet series as young plants (not flowering yet) due to the excess moisture, also some developed odd foliage spotting, we ripped a lot of those out for fear of spreading, the Amazon series had none of these problems, I found that interesting! will stick with my Amazon series!; Good, not great, relatively prolific, producing multiple stems per plant, though these stems were often short and flimsy, overall, does not compete with other varieties of dianthus grown; I'm not sure why anyone would grow this variety when they could grow the Amazon variety, bloom time from seed seemed the same so I just couldn't find a quality that made them worthwhile.

Dianthus 'Sweet Rose Magic'

(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Attractive globe-shaped blooms with a mix of white, pink, hot pink, and cherry red florets (7); Small size of flower heads made them good for market bouquets; Nice shape, nice stems, no complaints, bloomed a long time; Prolific, producing multiple harvestable stems per plant; Good market flower, sold on its own; REALLY tall! nice strong stems; Highly uniform plants and blooms, consistent with other Sweet varieties.

Problems: It's not a super easy sell for us, not sure why, great for long-lasting mixed bouquets, though I am a diehard Amazon dianthus grower, the Sweet series did not impress me, shorter and much smaller headed blooms than what I am used to growing. Had a lot of rot of blooms due to our 30 inches of rain over the growing season, but that happened to all of our field-grown dianthus varieties; Secondary shoots were often flimsy and thin; Shorter, hard to put into bouquets because of stem length, colors can be very vibrant and hard to work into color palettes, more of a market flower, not a good event flower because of bright color combos, rain is detrimental to this plant, blooms rotted; White shades browned easily, perhaps due to rain in field; I had a hard time getting a nice stem, I found I had to

pick extremely early with hardly any colour showing, otherwise some of the florets would look damaged, not sure if this was because of weather or that they just age quicker, I had it growing in the same row as the Amazon dianthus and have never had that problem with that variety, the stems were also shorter than my Amazon plants.

Similar Cultivars: 'Amazon Rose Magic'; Comparable in appearance to 'Sweet Pink Magic', but with more red/cherry tones.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN.

Comments: I prefer 'Sweet Rose Magic' to 'Sweet Pink Magic', having the darker red tones in 'Sweet Rose Magic' made this variety a little more versatile for making mixed bouquets; Had all of my Sweet trial growing right next to all of our Dianthus Amazon series in the field in many succession plantings, lost a lot of the Sweet series as young plants (not flowering yet) due to the excess moisture, also some developed odd foliage spotting, we ripped a lot of those out for fear of spreading, the Amazon series had none of these problems, I found that interesting! will stick with my Amazon series!; Grown in a high tunnel.

Helichrysum 'Granvia Gold'

(Suntory Flowers)

Good Qualities: Amazing yellow color (4); Great for drying (2); Healthy foliage; Large bloom up to 3 inches, I planted this in three locations: in hoop house, in sunbelt with drip line irrigation, and in the field through bio plastic with no irrigation, the bloom production was equal in all locations, exposure to the elements for the majority of the growing season did not seem to cause any problems, the hoop house planting was still blooming in November, although considerably less production, support netting for this crop was not required; Branched on its own, dried it all and sold in the fall, held its color very well!; Nice big heads, one main stem with 3-5 flowers per stem.

Problems: Too short (4), sometimes customers bought them anyway; Finishes too early; Not as many longer single-stemmed flowers; Our other strawflower reached normal height just fine.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: Dried flower.

Comments: Love this; The color really glowed, dried great and the florist I sold to loved them, and didn't care if they were short; The liners arrived well established, I transplanted to 4-inch pots to hold them until they could be planted to the hoop and outdoor locations, in hindsight I would have used a larger pot, perhaps 6-inch, as they are quite vigorous, after planting they seemed to stay very compact and covered in blooms, I felt as this time they were more of a bedding plant than a cut, and also wondered if I had left them in the 4-inch pots too long and they had become root bound, I completely removed blooms and buds from half of the plants in the hoophouse to see if that would promote some new, longer stems, the stems seemed strong and held up well compared to the seed strawflowers that occasionally tend to droop over, by late July the stem length had improved on all the hoop plants, we used them in our medium bouquets, these popular large yellow blooms were impressive and stood out from the seed varieties, having them early in the season before the seed varieties were ready was



'King Size Frosted Sulphur'

Photo Renee Clayton

a bonus, having the option to use dry or fresh also a bonus, I removed the shorter blooms throughout the season and dried the heads, would make a good container plant, but would require deadheading to keep the old shattered blooms removed, certainly a good producer, would be an excellent contender for a cut flower if the stems were longer, healthy plant no disease issues, despite the shorter stems I will be ordering a few plugs for 2022.

Helichrysum 'King Size Frosted Sulphur'

(Takii Europe)

Good Qualities: Large flowers (6); Strong/vigorous plants (5); Nice cream color (3), not stark white, can blend with most anything; Tall (2); Welcome addition, ivory with a hint of very soft lemon yellow, giving it a soft glow, the blooms were plentiful, produced continuous stems from mid-July thru October, dries to a lovely creamy ivory which blends well with every colour, healthy plant despite a very wet September, no insect issues, still a few stems mid-November; Productive, unique and interesting color combination—silvery buds open to pale lemon-yellow to silver blooms; Tall, nice pure white.

Problems: The color is a sort of dirty white (2), white with yellow tinge, is it white? is it light yellow? was not super

prolific; Low germination; None; We don't know how to harvest, seemed to brown/mold pretty quickly, early, tall, needed netting.

Similar Cultivars: White strawflower.

Postharvest Recommendations: Remove most of the leaves; Make sure the stems are mature prior to harvest, otherwise the stem will not support the flower; Hang dry after using in fresh arrangements; Easy peasy if cut at the right time.

Comments: Interesting color (3); and described perfectly as "frosted sulphur", is a great color for dried things; Good for weddings, but not a favorite at farmers' market, the flowers were the largest I have ever seen for any strawflower I have grown; Long-lasting and dries; Didn't care for the color at all!; We grew this variety alongside our main strawflower crop, field grown in bio plastic, greenhouse sown May 9 and transplanted to field June 12, growth habit similar to all the King size varieties, would recommend cutting deep into the plant when harvesting the first stem, which is typically thick and heavy in all seed *Helichrysum bracteatum*, going forward we will pinch central stem prior to transplant to encourage early branching and perhaps avoid that heavy first stem, keeping the flowers harvested encourages production, very useful in



'Granvia Gold'

Photo Jamie Sammons

bouquet work for added interest and texture; The white has a slight yellow; This variety dries well, similar to other strawflower varieties, as blooms dry, the flowers darken to a more solid lemon-yellow color; It was hard to classify the colour—it was white but yet a tinge of yellow in it, so the wedding designers wanted a purer white and didn't like this, it was fine for market; We had disease in our helichrysums, which caused the plants to die prematurely, otherwise the number of stems would have been higher.

Lisianthus 'Arosa 3 Pure White'

(Gloeckner)

Good Qualities: The snowy white is amazing (3), even when grown outdoors; The pure white flower head was large, the stems were not able to support the flower head; Perfect spiraling centre looks like a hybrid tea rose; Can't go wrong with a white lisianthus; Extra-large frilled, cup-shaped flowers, good germination, robust seedlings and robust stems, for a lisianthus, pretty easy to grow from seed; Highly uniform, buds have a delicate rosebud appearance; Sturdy stems, lovely flower, great vase life; Loved it.

Problems: Germination was very slow and the seedlings were the tiniest of all trialed lisianthus, growth was slow; We had thrips both inside and out in spite of

spraying, we will try them in pots next year; Rain easily damages white petals if grown outside; Difficult to germinate. *Similar Cultivars:* None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: Not a significant addition to the white lisianthus cultivars available; The Arosa lisianthus were the best and put out more stems; We had so much rain this season that it damaged a lot of our blooms, lisianthus is very prone to rain damage; These flowers were absolutely stunning in an all-white wedding I designed in August, it will be hard to grow any other white lisianthus after growing this one!; Nice-sized bloom, tidy, clean bright white, will search for available plugs for 2022; This white really stood out for its color!

Lisianthus 'Arosa 3 Red'

(Gloeckner)

Good Qualities: Good germination (2); Robust seedlings (2); Good grower; Looks like a rose with tight form: almost like a hybrid tea rose; Long lasting; Beautiful antiqued dark pink, robust stems; I don't grow a lot of darker colours because of the discolouration of the petals from moisture (I grow everything outside) but I loved this colour, it was a nice rich red/burgundy and had darker spots along the edge of the petals, I think from the weather, but I thought that added to the uniqueness of the colour, the buds were gorgeous before they opened as well, it looked great in mixed bouquets; The red color is interesting—a little darker and more dramatic than the softer lisianthus colors, highly uniform plants and blooms.

Problems: The color is a hard sell; Once open the blooms were discolored with almost streaking of the color, I would pick it more in the bud stage instead, on the shorter side of how I like lisianthus; The color didn't sell well for me, customers didn't seem to love it as much as the blushes and pastels, petals showed rain damage easily; I sell most of my lisianthus to wedding designers and it was not a popular colour for that sales outlet; We had thrips both inside and out in spite of spraying.



'Arosa 3 Red'
Photo Susan Miller

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: If I had the market for this color, I would grow it again, but I grow within specific color ranges for my client base; Red grown in the field is generally a problem here with marking and colour variation, this shade of red was lighter than 'Rosita Red'; A beautiful lisianthus! A favorite with farmers' market sales; Color very close to 'Doublini Rose'.

Lisianthus 'Can Can Purple'

(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Velvety dark blue colour! (4); Robust growth (2); Fast and easy germination (2); Numerous buds and flowers at ends of stems; Flowers open all at once on long stems; Good seedling growth; Strong stems; Tall stems, full stems; Long vase life; Robust seedlings and transplants.

Problems: On the short side; Color too dark for my client base; Difficult to germinate; We had thrips both inside and out in spite of spraying; Not tall enough or enough blooms per stem, 2nd flush not looking strong or tall enough.

Similar Cultivars: 'Arena Purple' for colour and flower shape/size; The colour was similar to any other purple I've grown in the past.



'Arosa 3 Pure White'
Photo Rachael Ackerman

Very full frilly blooms; I will definitely be growing this variety again, the petal shape and color were stunning, there's not much I don't love about a lisianthus and 'Celeb 2 Madonna' exceeded my expectations.

Postharvest Recommendations: Cool.
Comments: Really liked this one, already ordered seeds for next year!; 'Can Can Purple' is an easy-to-grow, strong plant, I like how the stems carry multiple flowers, I wish this cultivar came in more colors; An all-around good classic purple lisianthus, a decent fall flush of shorter stems from this variety; I stopped growing purple since I grow all my lisianthus outside and they spot, this spotted a bit but I didn't notice nearly as much (but that might have just been because of the weather that I was having this summer), the stems were so large



'CanCan Purple'

Photo John Dole

and full that I should have double netted, it was profitable for market because of how full the stems were, designers didn't ever need this colour; Straight upright stems, unique color wasn't as beloved as a garden plant color, however, it was very useful for weddings with purple color theme requests.

Lisianthus 'Celeb 2 Madonna' (Gloeckner)

Good Qualities: Beautiful pale pink (5), light pink blooms have a dark rose edge—this color is interesting and versatile; Strong stems (2); Stem length, high germination rate, robust seedlings, fluffy flower form; Very full frilly blooms; I will definitely be growing this variety again, the petal shape and color were stunning, there's not much I don't love about a lisianthus and this one exceeded my expectations; Gorgeous frilly blooms in an ever so popular, good producer of fall side stems; The blooms were a good size; Highly double, deeply ruffled blooms, healthy plants; Multi-petaled; Favorite of the three, 3rd flush great, love, love, love!!

Problems: ZERO; Germination of seeds a little more erratic; Unique colour was not popular with designers; Difficult for us to germinate.

Similar Cultivars: No; 'Voyage Pink'; Bloom size and look was similar to Voyage lisianthus (2), although bloom size was slightly smaller compared to Voyage.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: This is a delightful cultivar with fluffy, large flowers in a unique and



'Corelli Light Lavender'

Photo Jamie Sammons

gentle pink/purple tone, very useful in design work, it was easy to grow and was robust and strident in its progress through the season, most impressive!; Excessive rain caused browning, and for some buds to rot without opening; This flower was just so lovely! on its own or it would just add magic to any bouquet and the frilly flowers were quite robust and great in boutonnieres!; I thought I would love this one but because there are different shades of colour on one stem (changes a bit as it ages), I wasn't able to sell very many to the designers, it worked fine in mixed bouquets, but since it didn't grow as full or tall as a series like Voyage, I didn't love it enough to grow again; A favorite for our florist crowd, perfect shade and abundant petals.

Lisianthus 'Corelli Light Lavender' (American Takii)

Good Qualities: Lovely color (3); Full frilly blooms (3); We have been hunting for a good lavender lisianthus, we may have found our new favorite in 'Corelli Light Lavender', we like the Corelli series a lot already and are happy that there is now a lavender in the series that we know is reliable; Long lasting like any other lisianthus, Corellis are a sure



'Flare Jade'

Photo John Dole

Comments: In general, my lisianthus got brown because of the rain during flower development, but the lavender especially showed the damage, I love this colour for blending with darker purple and green; We really liked this lisi, despite being started in late March we had some decent blooms, a staff and customer favourite! created lots of interest, will be looking for this one and more in the series if available for 2022, feel we would have had more stems if the plant was established earlier, no insect issues, a Special Lisi! one we were excited to be growing.

Lisianthus 'Flare Jade'

(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Soft creamy green blends well with other colours (2); Strong stems (2); Good germination and seedling growth, early bloomer; Tall, full stems; Upright stems; Multiple flowers open at the top of plant at the same time—great for market bouquets because they take up room.

Problems: I love a green lisianthus but found the colour a little neon, almost too bright or harsh; Colors kind of boring, customers prefer brighter-colored lisi.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: Flower color could pass for cream or green, really very subtly different from 'Flare Yellow'; I should have double netted this variety, right when the stems were at their peak we got a good rain storm which toppled the patch, this variety is great for market bouquets, a good bang for your buck and the colour works well with bright, fun colours, the wedding designers didn't like it, 'Maria-chi Green' has a softer, more romantic look and colour and they preferred that; Lovely color for arrangements.

Lisianthus 'Flare Yellow'

(BloomStudio)

Good Qualities: Lovely buttery yellow-cream colour (4); Multiple flowers open at the top of plant at the same time—great for market bouquets because they take up room; Elegant form; Strong stems, good germination and strong seedling growth; Tall strong stems, lots



'Flare Yellow'

Photo John Dole

of blooms; Upright stems.

Problems: Colors kind of boring, customers prefer brighter colored lisi; A bit short and not very prolific.

Similar Cultivars: 'Arena Yellow'.

Postharvest Recommendations: Cool.

Comments: With all of our lisianthus, we had lots of rain just as the flushes of bloom opened, so the flowers got mushy and brown; I sold these both to designers and to market, it worked well for both and there were a lot of blooms on each stem so a stem went a long way, should have double netted it because they got heavy, it doesn't have quite as soft a look to it which I think I prefer but it bloomed at a time when my other yellows weren't, so I liked it for extending the availability of what I could offer; Lovely flower.

Lisianthus 'Little Summer 1 Orange'

(Gloeckner)

Good Qualities: AMAZING COLOR (5), beautiful, delicate blooms in shades of rose, cream, and apricot; Loved how tiny the blooms were, super cute! (3); Smaller heads made them perfect for boutonnieres, corsages, flower crowns! (2); Excellent cut flower!; Strong stems, strong blooms; Great color and smaller blooms are versatile compared to some

winner; Big blooms with surprisingly strong stems holding the bloom upright, recommend growing in hoop or tunnel for best results; Nice stems.

Problems: I've never grown a lisianthus that grew so short, I used only a handful of stems that I could use in a short mason jar bouquets, I actually had this already growing from my own seed order so I had two plantings seeded at different times and both were extremely short; Hard to start from seed; We had thrips both inside and out in spite of spraying, this one was the worst with bugs; These were a little shorter than our other Corellis, but that is probably due to grower error unless that is something seen across the board in these trial results.

Similar Cultivars: The lavender colour was similar to any other lavender I've grown, the blooms were full and multi-petaled, I haven't grown another lisianthus in that colour with that type of bloom.

Postharvest Recommendations: We grew this one in the hoophouse, you have to decide whether or not to harvest with one bloom out or cut that bloom off and wait for more to open, if left too long the humidity in the tunnel increases despite open sides, still had some browning on the blooms due to the humid conditions; Cool.

of the larger varieties; Very floriferous. *Problems:* Plants were shorter than other lisianthus (2); None; Can't find a source for 2022 growing season; A smaller plant, needs even more attention to weeding; Plants were tiny at germination, grew larger slowly but were robust once they got going, the plant did not grow to significant height but did bloom, it was beautiful but too short to sell; Colour fades in heat and with age.

Similar Cultivars: Doublini lisianthus; No.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: I liked this one so much I already ordered seed for next year, this was a winner!; I really loved working with this flower, and it kept having side stems in the fall, that, though short, were just so perfect for small arrangements and wearables; I loved these little blooms, I think it really depends on your market for this one, the blooms are smaller so for a farmers' market they won't be showy but for design work they offer a different size that will hold up well on nice strong stems, I liked pairing then with other lisianthus in a mixed bouquet because they had a different feel to them, I was hoping for the colour to be a bit lighter orange/light brown but they were more apricot to me—still pretty—just always looking for a moodier flower



'Megalo 3 Orchid'

Photo John Dole

for those designers; I would have liked longer stem length on this lisianthus, the unique color and flower form would be useful in the industry; I loved using this variety in bloom and bud as filler with the larger lisianthus colours, also got rave reviews from my customer who grows and sells lisianthus.

Lisianthus 'Megalo 3 Orchid' (Gloeckner)

Good Qualities: Very pleasing light lavender (4); Strong stems (2); Outstanding germination, large, robust seedlings, large plant size; Large flowers; Healthy and uniform plants; We really liked this one, it did bloom quite late in the season so would not recommend for areas hit by early freezing temps; Large full blooms, great height.

Problems: None; We had thrips both inside and out in spite of spraying; Germination a little erratic; Colour is more like lavender than orchid, which was disappointing.

Similar Cultivars: Looks like many other lilac-colored lisianthus blooms; I don't have a lot of lavender lisianthus experience to compare to **but it was similar to the lavender** I had been growing; 'Voyage 2 Lavender', although blooms are not quite as full or deeply ruffled as 'Voyage 2 Lavender'.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: I liked this cultivar very much and used it in a late wedding, this cultivar came at the perfect time for event work and was a strong workable stem, it looked delicate, yet was a beast and carried the wedding floral work forward; The last lisianthus to bloom from the Trial, a good one to extend the flowering season; Another fancy lisi with great colour, and stems, perhaps a bit late for us when starting from seed, if plugs are available in 2022 we will be ordering some; Nice, taller, flimsy stem, soft color, single petals.

Marigold 'Devi Deep Gold' (AmeriSeed)

Good Qualities: Great gold color (6); Tall stems (5); Sturdy stems (2); Nice growth habit, a keeper; Huge prominent flowers (2); Long, straight, stems; Highest yield per plant of any of the marigolds we grew; This was I feel tied for first place in the marigolds this season, super strong stems, impressive blooms, amazing vase life of more than 2 weeks, combined with self-supporting stems made for excellent results, overall plant height was close to 4 ft. with fully double blooms 3.5-4 inches, as we had no frost until November the blooms were still of decent quality; Vigorous plants, uniform, wide full gold blooms, earlier to bloom by 7-10 days compared to 'Garuda' and 'Mishka Deep Gold';



'Little Summer 1 Orange'

Photo Rachael Ackerman



Photo Shannon Jones

Prolific bloomer; Took a frost without a problem; Large bloom, healthy plant; Real nice.

Problems: Got leaf spots very early, would not grow again; Flowers suffered more from petal discoloration than other varieties; Stems can have a tendency to snap—seem less sturdy compared to ‘Mishka Deep Gold’.

Similar Cultivars: All golds; Comparable in color and bloom form to ‘Coco Gold’, although ‘Coco Gold’ is earlier to bloom; ‘Garuda Deep Gold’, ‘Mishka Deep Gold’.

Postharvest Recommendations: We find marigolds easy to hydrate in clean water, place in #2 grower solution after cleaning stems, stores in cooler.

Comments: Would grow again if seed is available, limiting available nitrogen when growing these tall cut flower marigolds has its rewards—stronger stems; I couldn’t tell much difference between most of the marigolds I grew this year, all seemed healthy, easy to grow, good stem length, and easy to mix into all market bouquets.

Marigold ‘Garuda Deep Gold’

(AmeriSeed)

Good Qualities: Tall (6); Large flowers (4), some very close to 4 inches; Good bright colour (3); Strong stems (3); Best and favorite gold this year; Multiple heads per stem; Long harvest

window; Long straight stems; Flowers were nice and full; Slightly longer stem than ‘Garuda Yellow Imp.’, dries well, overall plant height was 46 to 48 inches; Vigorous plants, uniform, wide full gold blooms; Large, healthy plant; Nice stems with few branches that required strip-ping, vigorous plants; Real nice.

Problems: The latest gold variety in the Trial—many plants lodged in heavy July rains before plants reached peak production, stems tended to snap a little more with this variety, heavy blooms seemed out of proportion with thin stems on some plants, None.

Similar Cultivars: ‘Devi Deep Gold’.

Postharvest Recommendations: We find marigolds easy to hydrate in clean water, place in #2 grower solution after cleaning stems, store in cooler; Placed in Hydraflor, then FloraLife, then cooler.

Comments: Another great marigold and garden workhorse; The Garuda marigolds were the ones we kept going to, they kept us in constant supply for bouquet additions, good strong necks and great stem length, top three in marigold trial 2021, all the marigolds were grown in soil, no added fertilizer or compost, no mulch, support netting or irrigation, however, we did have ample rainfall and consequently unfavourable conditions for spider mites (our #1 insect

to typically bother marigolds), I think it is a combination of these factors which made for a successful season, and yes, luck is always appreciated!; There was nothing wrong with this marigold, very healthy and easy to grow and worked great with my fall flowers; I think ‘Garuda Deep Gold’ was my favourite.

Marigold ‘Garuda Yellow Improved’ (AmeriSeed)

Good Qualities: Bright yellow color (5), the color is wonderful!; Sturdy/strong stems (5); Beautiful large blooms (3); Tall (3); Long straight stems (3); Long vase life (2); Big plants; Vigorous and uniform plants, blooms are full and uniform; Reliable stems, prolific bloomer; Easy to grow; Our favorite marigold of the year, by far!; Responded well to a deep pinch at transplant, good necks, dried well, the pinched plants had significant numbers of clean, even stems compared to unpinched, would recommend pinching at transplant rather than doing it later, often a person is busy and misses the ideal opportunity; Real nice.

Problems: Petals susceptible to black spotting; Yellow got spots on petals more easily than orange in late season; None, loved it as a good yellow marigold.

Similar Cultivars: Comparable to ‘Giant Yellow’, although color is slightly



Photo John Dole



Photo John Dole

darker and ‘Garuda Yellow’ bloomed about one week later in our field.

Postharvest Recommendations: We find marigolds easy to hydrate in clean water, place in #2 grower solution after cleaning stems, store in cooler.

Comments: Great yellow marigold, productive over a long haul; This is a very bright colour—like a flashing neon light, it made for a punch in my market bouquets but overall it took a special customer who liked how bright it was and that it was a marigold (okay with smell) compared to more of my customers who prefer a softer, more romantic bouquet; We loved this cultivar! it was our favorite type of marigold this year, probably ever! love, love, love!; ‘Garuda Yellow Improved’ was one of our top three marigolds, the large blooms were a great bouquet addition, we seemed to cut mostly from the two Garuda cultivars and the ‘Devi Deep Gold’, ‘Mishka Deep Gold’ was also a good one, however, it did fall over on us during the windstorm, whereas all other varieties remained upright, ‘Garuda Yellow Improved’ is an excellent variety and would recommend it.

Marigold ‘Mishka Deep Gold’

(AmeriSeed)

Good Qualities: Strong/sturdy (5); Great deep gold color, vibrant (4); Tall plants (4); Nice big blooms (3); Long, straight stems (3); Very double, healthy plants; Resists petal damage, long harvest window; Healthy plants; Smaller blooms averaged around 2.5-3 inches; Prolific bloomer, robust grower; Vigorous plants reached over 48 inches in our trial, uniform gold blooms, better quality than most in our planting; Good branching and strong side shoots, fairly little leaf spotting.

Problems: None! (2); Not a robust plant, hard to get a good usable stem from plant, don’t like the shape—too bushy; Late disease; Was the slowest of the marigolds to attain good cutting height; This one actually toppled over on us in early September while the others in the trial remained upright, for this reason it may not be as strong as the other varieties...



‘Mishka Deep Gold’

Photo John Dole



‘Narai Orange’

Photo John Dole

If I was going to grow a marigold just for garlands, ‘Narai Orange’ might be it—large flowers, on short plants that don’t need staking, and such a fast bloomer, flowers 6 weeks after transplanting.

ies... or it could have been just where the wind caught it; This variety bloomed a little later than some other gold varieties, tall plants were quick to lodge during heavy July rains; Heavy heads snapped a lot in a bad storm.

Similar Cultivars: ‘Jedi’; Color comparable to ‘Devi Deep Gold’ and ‘Garuda Deep Gold’; As good as ‘Oriental Deep Gold’, our favorite gold marigold.

Postharvest Recommendations: We find marigolds easy to hydrate in clean water, place in #2 grower solution after cleaning stems, store in cooler.

Comments: Solid workhorse of a marigold, I harvested quality stems for 3 months from an early April transplanting, young plants also decently cold tolerant and withstood a late frost; This was our favourite of all the marigolds

we grew; As it did topple over, I did not use it after early September; I couldn’t tell much difference between most of the marigolds I grew this year, all seemed healthy, easy to grow, good stem length, and easy to mix into all market bouquets; Will definitely grow again; Last planting they were first, big and beautiful, real nice.

Marigold ‘Narai Orange’

(AmeriSeed)

Good Qualities: Huge flowers! (5); Very productive (3); Nice orange (3), best orange this year; Took heat of the summer great; Tall straight stems; Compact plants just covered in flowers, a really fast bloomer, first trial marigold to bloom; Great plant vigor, long vase life; Beautiful full 2.5-4-inch-wide blooms



'Sumati Orange'

Photo John Dole

and healthy vigorous plants; Strong stems, healthy plant.

Problems: Plants were short and stems were not long enough to use for cuts (4); Didn't take cold weather well—it was the first to have dark leaves; Such a compact plant, to get a decent stem length, I had to cut most of the plant, but each stem had so many flowers it didn't take many to have a nice bunch; Late disease; Too many side branches and foliage to strip off cut stem, leaving wounds that I'm sure affected vase life.

Similar Cultivars: 'Sumati Orange' (2), these two varieties were very comparable.

Postharvest Recommendations: We find marigolds easy to hydrate in clean water, place in #2 grower solution after cleaning stems, store in cooler.

Comments: If I was going to grow a marigold just for garlands, this might be it, large flowers, on short plants that don't need staking, and such a fast bloomer, flowers 6 weeks after transplanting, the stem count doesn't accurately convey the productivity of this variety; Bloom quality and color were excellent, so it's possible this variety may work for growers producing marigolds for blooms only, not for stems; I couldn't tell much difference

between most of the marigolds I grew this year, all seemed healthy, easy to grow, good stem length, and easy to mix into all market bouquets; With the very impressive cultivars Garuda and Devi, 'Nari Orange' was outclassed, a good variety but did not have the presence of the two aforementioned.

Marigold 'Sumati Orange'

(AmeriSeed)

Good Qualities: Love the deep orange color (7); Very productive (2); Medium size flowers (3); Large size flowers (2); Really does not smell like other marigolds (for those who dislike this); Double flowers; Tall, straight stems; Productive for over 3 months; Robust grower, long-lasting vase life, great for cut flower use and botanical dyeing, appreciate its value in pest control in the garden, farmstand customers loved it; I pinched half at planting as a trial to see if the stems would have more single blooms, I did see a noticeable difference in all varieties and will use this practice going forward, 'Sumati Orange' responds well to a deep pinch at transplant to encourage single (non-branching) stems, the neck area seemed reasonably strong and bent neck was minimal; Beautiful full 2.5-4 inch-wide blooms and healthy vigorous plants; Strong sturdy stems.

Problems: Short plants (7); Color lacks vibrancy of typical yellows/golds—did not seem to have as much use for us, greatly reduced vigor vs. other marigold varieties, developed leaf spots far earlier than 'Chedi Orange' or 'Oriental Deep Gold'—we mowed them down at least a month before the others, shorter than many other varieties, we had low Japanese beetle pressure this season, but still the beetles preferred this variety; Could be darker shade of orange; Slower to begin blooming, last marigold in the trial to bloom; Some leaf spots developed earlier than other marigolds, dense plants made harvest more challenging; Most marigolds have a vulnerable neck as it is hollow, reducing the nitrogen available helps with the soft neck; Late disease.

Similar Cultivars: Very similar to 'Na-

rai Orange Improved'; The bloom was very similar to any of the other orange marigolds in the Trial.

Postharvest Recommendations: We find marigolds easy to hydrate in clean water, place in #2 grower solution after cleaning stems, store in cooler; Placed in Hydraflor, then cooler.

Comments: I loved this marigold, maybe it was the orange color, or the plant height is just right for good stem length without really needing much staking, also least susceptible to petal spotting in the Trial, I had very few reject stems from these plants, just about every flower was marketable; This variety air dried well, it remained upright without support, I grew the marigolds in the same area as the suns, sheltered from the north and west winds, no irrigation, no added soil amendments, we did have ample rainfall and the plants were rarely stressed, they did not have any insect pressure, I am trying to introduce both customers and staff to get over the marigold stigma, they are an excellent, long-lasting, easily-grown flower that produces lots of usable stems and for these reasons deserves some positive recognition, especially for autumnal bouquets; Bloom quality and color were excellent, so it's possible this variety may work for growers producing marigolds for blooms only, not for stems; This plant was so short, I cut it only the last week of the season when I really needed some blooms and found a few stems worthwhile for some small bouquets in my second succession of it.

Marigold 'White Swan'

(AmeriSeed)

Good Qualities: Great cream color (8), a different color for marigolds; I couldn't get enough of this little gem, the color was a perfect cream yellow that matched just about anything you put it with, it's a great size bloom and long lasting too, I can't wait to grow even more next year, customers loved it!; Smaller size, good shape and doubleness, consistent cream colour throughout season; Prolific, lots of color in the garden; First marigold to bloom (though petered out first as well);

This was an interesting marigold addition, it actually had a pleasant scent; It bloomed quickly, in fact the easiest to boom in the Trial, the creamy colour was easy to incorporate into bouquets; Rigorous grower, prolific bloomer; Long stems for a cream-colored variety, uniform creamy blooms are highly double, very light sweet fragrance to the blooms—this variety does not have the typical “marigold” smell; I liked the smaller bloom size; First to flowers of the cultivars in the Trial.

Problems: Too short (7); Small flowers (6); Light colour shows browning more than the yellows and oranges (3); Lack of vigor, low number of flowers per plant vs. many other marigold varieties, early onset of leaf spots, we mowed these down at least a month earlier than ‘Chedi Orange’ planted at the same time, we did not find this white/cream as useful as the other flowers that serve the same purpose (lisianthus, feverfew, asters); Washed-out bloom color; Late disease; Low germination success; After the first month of harvest, stems started to get spindly and had more trouble with petal spotting; Got diseased and then died early in season, while all the other marigolds were hitting their stride, the foliage just melted out early while other marigolds kept going until frost, the flower

planting of the ‘White Swan’; The elusive search for a white marigold is still alive and well, not a strong marigold, apparently attractive to voracious bunnies; Teeny, worthless.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest

Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: Didn’t grow enough of it, loved it!!!; Because we make mostly supermarket bouquets, we prefer bolder and more saturated colors; Had high hopes for this one but was not impressed; Earliest to bloom of the marigolds in our trial, was not completely consumed by Japanese beetles like other white varieties in the past; We appreciated the color of this cultivar, however, the stems were short and the blooms small; It was fun to try a white marigold; Best cream-colored marigold I have ever grown, by far!; I was disappointed when this plant became infected with disease, the staff actually



‘African Bride’

Photo Melissa Fischbach

the field in late June, for each variety I deeply pinched half of each tray in hopes of cleaner stems, with ‘White Swan’ I was unable to determine if this had any effect on the number or length of stems, due to the disease pressure, I grew all the marigolds in a fertile field with no added fertilizer or amendments, same conditions as the sunflowers with no irrigation or mulch; Lovely garden plant, the plant grows quite tightly packed, so for cut flower production, some elongation in the plant would be helpful; Even though my stems were shorter, I probably used this variety the most of all the marigolds, the colour allowed easy use throughout the summer without the bouquet looking too “fall”, I’m always looking for more options of flowers that can go in the cooler and that have a great vase life and can be mixed with other summer blooms easily and I thought this did, I just needed to use it in my shorter, mason jar bouquets, but that’s a popular size bouquet for my farmers’ market so I was happy.

Nigella ‘African Bride’
(Takii Europe)

Good Qualities: The bloom ocular was pleasing and the seed pod attractive; Beautiful flowers, love the contrast between the petals and stamens; Nice color and sturdy; Nice pods, I prefer more striping, but these are acceptable.

Problems: Poor germination (3); None (2); Not a lot of vigour, the plants remained

White Swan (was) the best cream-colored marigold I have grown, by far!

doesn’t really stand out, medium-sized plants; This variety for some reason succumbed to a disease when it was approaching full flower, I was watchful towards the other marigolds in the trial but none were affected, it was planted between other blocks of marigold, I did not apply any preventative fungicides to any of the marigolds, seeing it did not affect any others I wondered if it may have been a seed-borne disease, whatever it was totally killed the entire

liked using this small flower, and I am always happy when they will use a marigold, the blooms were small but the stems seemed strong including the vulnerable neck, it was certainly easy to germinate and quick to bloom, would like more information on what may have affected this plant, if it happened to anyone else, and find any preventative measures to take if growing again, as with all the marigolds in the Trial I planted directly into 50 cell trays May 21 and transplanted them to



'Café au Lait'
Photo Susan Miller

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder of salpiglossis 'Café au Lait': "I absolutely loved the color of this one—it went so well with the popular rusty hues that clients are asking for." and "I just couldn't get over how unappealing this brown color was!"

short, I have grown this variety in the past and prefer to grow the more obliging *Nigella damascene*; Sometimes needed staking, stems not always very sturdy.

Similar Cultivars: Seed pod of *Nigella* 'Transformer' is similar in shape.

Postharvest Recommendations: Never used nigella fresh, we grow for the pods, cut, hang, and dry.

Comments: The seed pod of this variety may be of interest to a dried flower enthusiast and the bloom colour is interesting, I found for my own use, it would be a variety I can do without, if we had better germination, the results may have been different, they were germinated indoors and transplanted to the field, I would not recommend direct seeding unless you had good quantities of seed available; I look forward to planting it for overwintering as my overwintered nigella tend to have stronger stems and be taller.

Salpiglossis 'Café au Lait' (Takii Europe)

Good Qualities: Lovely unique color (5), blooms opened in shades of red and copper, with some yellow; I absolutely loved the color of this one, it went so well with the popular rusty hues that clients are asking for; Lasts well, unusual.

Problems: Stunted growth, did not grow well (4); Sticky stems (2); Poor/erratic germination (2); UGLY brown color! short vase life; didn't grow that well for me. I think the rainy went sea-

son we had didn't help. We had a lot of disease in the field this year, normally my salpiglossis does pretty decent and keeps sending up more blooms throughout the season, this variety gave me only a few usable stems and didn't rebloom; Slow growth of seedlings, they just petered out on me; not a strong candidate for commercial cut flower production; Didn't like the color, stinky as well.

Similar Cultivars: None listed.

Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigerate.

Comments: The color of this variety is unique, but not very versatile, combined with the short stems, I'm not sure I would grow this again; This was my first time growing salpiglossis and the ease of growing made me purchase seeds for next year, but in much prettier colors! I just couldn't get over how unappealing this brown color was!; It was nice to have something different, and beautiful; I was very excited about this variety early on because I've liked growing deep purple salpiglossis in the past, but this variety's colour ended up looking like a layer of yellow overlaying the purple to create the brown (and I could often see both yellow and purple in the blooms), it was less usable than I'd hoped; Found the colour to be an acquired taste—was actually expecting a creamy shade and was surprised by the dark colour, might be a good one for a designer who works out of their own garden, too delicate for everyday bouquets, might be of interest also to a home gardener for fall colour, I have tried salpiglossis in the past and

had the same results—too delicate for bouquet use.

Snapdragon 'Costa Summer Lavender IV'

(Evanthia)

Good Qualities: Beautiful soft lavender color (2); The stems were the thickest I've ever had with a snapdragon, they were so strong! the head size of the blooms/buds was also lovely, larger than previous varieties I have grown, they were the tallest of all my snaps this year; Plants produced tall, strong stems in an interesting, muted purple color that proved very popular; Excellent germination and strong growth of seedlings; Easy colour to blend with in bouquets; Love the Costa Series, Lavender is one of the most popular colors sold; Tall stems, early bloomer; Nice strong stems, long and full flower column; Tall vigorous plants, beautiful blooms in shades of purple and lavender, well-balanced blooms; Robust.

Problems: Stems not as strong as 'Potomac' but still a great bloom, low germination success rate; Odd color, neither lavender nor pink.

Similar Cultivars: 'Potomac Lavender' (2); Similar color to 'Rocket Lavender'; 'Opus Lavender' color is comparable; 'Apple Blossom', which seems better.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: I grow everything outside without the aid of a greenhouse, these were the nicest snaps I've ever had in terms of stem strength, bloom size, and length of stems, I really loved them!; Plants would really benefit from pinching.



'Costa Summer Lavender IV'

Photo Melissa Fischbach



'Legend Yellow Improved'

Photo Melissa Fischbach

Snapdragon 'Legend Yellow Improved'

(American Takii)

Good Qualities: Brilliant, bright yellow color (5); Very sturdy plant (2); Good grower, fast to bloom, easy from seed, pretty; Florets are well spaced on the stem, bright colour is consistent through summer; It was the first of all my snapdragons to bloom; Tall; Uniform plants with well-balanced blooms; Awesome first blooms, wimpy afterwards.

Problems: The only problem is that the yellow color is too fluorescent (3), and it's hard to sell, but I look forward to the day when yellow fluorescent will be the hot color and I hope I'm ready;

Not nearly as tall as other field varieties, much shorter than Potomac varieties, not tall enough for me to consider growing again; Weak, thrips; Really long, skinny tips, really easy to snap off, unfortunately, long bloom column which was great, but made it hard to handle and transport; Bottom blossoms turned orangey with blotches as they aged; Plants were short

compared to most other varieties in this planting, but most other varieties were Group 3 varieties, so I would expect this one to possibly be taller in a different planting slot.

Similar Cultivars: 'Legend Yellow'; Color similar to 'Potomac Yellow'.

Postharvest Recommendations: Cure in cooler before use, strip leaves, use a tall bucket to support full stem length.

Comments: Again and again, I am always impressed with the strength and robust sturdiness of snapdragons and this one especially, so strong and upright, we just consistently cringed at the color; I don't think Group 1 snapdragons are meant for summer growing in North,

and they don't look as full as a Potomac variety, I might not be comparing apples to apples though; I found the colour really bright, I don't mind yellow and it was okay for market sales, but was not at all popular with my designers/florists who prefer a more buttery yellow if they ever (which is rare) want a yellow; Nice color; At first, in the field, the yellow seemed fluorescent to me and I was worried it would be too bright, but once I mixed it in with other flowers, it really added a nice brightness; This very bold yellow is one of my least favorite snapdragon colors, however, for those who do appreciate this color, this is a good variety.



'Maryland Rose'

Photo Melissa Fischbach

Snapdragon 'Maryland Rose'

(BloomStudios)

Good Qualities: A nice mid-dark pink, deep but very soft color (5); Strong thick stems (4); This snap produced lots of stems, didn't seem stressed with heat, worked great in market bouquets, very similar in colour to 'Potomac Dark Pink', would describe as a compact version of 'Potomac Pink Dark'; Dense, compact flower, Real nice.



'Canneto White'

Photo Shannon Jones

Stock 'Canneto White' was a dream machine—this will remain in my rotation.

Similar Cultivars: The color of this variety falls between 'Potomac Pink' and 'Potomac Cherry Rose'.

Postharvest Recommendations: Make sure there are at least 3-4 sets of florets open, if cut too early, they tend to curve

Comments: Nice color; We grew this next to the 'Maryland Rose' also in the Trial, it was basically identical in colour, but the stems of the 'Maryland Rose' were much shorter, the Potomac kept reblooming for us all summer, it was the favourite snap of the 2021 Trial,

outstanding in large arrangements, we grow in black bio mulch in the field with no irrigation, this year we had ample rainfall and very few insect issues, I did have a serious outbreak of downy mildew which I believe came from some imported snap plugs, it was possibly the worst disease problem I have ever dealt with, and was extremely infectious, I lost (destroyed) 70 trays of my main season snaps ready to go to the field, which was devastating, for some reason the two snaps I mentioned above did not succumb to the disease, I am not hinting they were resistant—I think just luck, they were sown a bit later and were not in contact with the other trays, hopefully we can recognize this is a very serious problem; We grow only the Potomac series for snaps here and have for years, these are great to add to the Potomac lineup!; Performance is consistent with the rest of the Potomac series—uniform, productive, a nice overall variety.

Snapdragon 'Potomac Pink Improved' (BloomStudios)

Good Qualities: Great light-medium pink (4); strong sturdy stems (2); Uniform height throughout all three varieties; Even colour throughout the season, well-filled spikes; Tall; Attractive standard pink snapdragon.

Problems: We had a huge problem with tarnished plant bugs and they loved the

snaps, had stunted blooms and disfigurement; Not quite as tall or uniform as 'Potomac Dark Pink'.

Similar Cultivars: I didn't notice much difference between 'Potomac Pink' and the Improved.

Postharvest Recommendations: None listed.

Comments: We grow only the Potomac series for snaps here and have for years, these are great to add to the Potomac lineup!; Nice color.

Stock 'Canneto White' (American Takii)

Good Qualities: High percentage of doubles (5), loved having 90% double flower on the crop; Sturdy (3); Beautiful white colour (2); Tightly-packed fluffy florets (2); Very full; Nice full tower of blooms, even after 2+ weeks of 90+ degrees in the spring!!; Tall stems; Nice early bloomer; Easy to grow, very non-demanding; Well programmed, only one cut, no second cuts.

Problems: None (2); My flower heads weren't huge and not super tall stems but I think that is possibly since I did not grow them under cover and possibly could have had them in the ground a week or two earlier; A bit top-heavy bloom for the stem to support, and the crop had variable bloom time; A bit shorter than other varieties in the same planting; Some got ugly before opening enough to cut.

Similar Cultivars: 'Cheerfulness'; The dense structure of the florets is similar to 'Iron White', but the whole inflorescence was larger than we typically get with the Iron series.

Postharvest Recommendations: Cure by refrigeration.

Comments: Low survival rate among plants; Very easy to germinate; I planted in the second succession in my high tunnel. My first succession gets taller but I wanted to trial in a middle succession; White is always an easy sale, even the

Problems: Not as productive as 'Rocket Series'.

Similar Cultivars: Similar color to Potomac Pink'; similar in colour only to 'Potomac Pink Dark'.

Postharvest Recommendations: Always cure in cooler before use in bouquets and arrangements.

Comments: Exceptionally sturdy plant, with robust flowering heads; for a bouquet product this variety worked very well, recommend, nice rich colour, as we had disease issues with most of my snaps, we cut every stem they produced, field grown with no irrigation.

Snapdragon 'Potomac Pink Dark' (BloomStudios)

Good Qualities: Dark pink florets (5), have no gold or white coloring on them; Sturdy (3); Good fill within the spikes, survived summer weather; Strong, thick stems, would most likely get taller if grown indoors or started earlier; Very vigorous, stems were strong and easy to keep upright in the field; Uniform height throughout all three varieties; Easy to clean, tall, healthy and vigorous plants; Favorite.

Problems: We had a huge problem with tarnished plant bugs and they loved the snaps, had stunted blooms and disfigurement; Not as dark of color as the name would imply.



'Milla Light Pink'

Photo Shannon Jones

singles looked great! 'Canneto White' was a dream machine—this will remain in my rotation.

Stock 'Milla Light Pink'

(Evanthia)

Good Qualities: Gorgeous, soft, gentle pink (7), petals opened in a dusty rose shade and lightened to a delicate pink; Plants were sturdy/vigorous (3); Good for events, great fragrance; Even the singles were useful; Easy to germinate; Double blooms.

Problems: Didn't produce; Height, stems a bit slender (though still strong and straight), could be a good thing; Zero.

Similar Cultivars: 'Apple Blossom', which seems better.

Postharvest Recommendations: Refrigeration after harvest.

Comments: Good germination and the seedlings looked great when field planted early June; It averaged four inches shorter than the other stock varieties we grow, I planted it in the second succession in our high tunnel in the spring, the first succession stock are always taller but I wanted to see how it performed in a middle succession planting. Some singles (much more than 'Canneto White' which had almost none) but a good rate of doubles; This is a stock that is very useful in the wedding/events rotation, the color is gentle, I could have sold an entire greenhouse full of this; We are big fans of these blooms and we'll seek them out regularly, great for bridal and events.

Sunflower 'Double Sunking'

(Takii Europe)

Good Qualities: Beautiful double flowers (4); Easy to grow and after the main stem, most plants had usable side stems from an early planting; Sturdy, robust; Customers loved the double fuzzy centers, much taller than some other double sunflower varieties, strong heads don't get floppy; Full and fluffy, nice bright color with green center; Uniform 5-7 inch wide flowers are bright and attractive, multiple cuts of 12-24-inch stems; Beautiful deep gold double sunflower,

was a huge hit with our farmers' market customers, very forgiving regarding harvest stage which is great, they can be cut very tight or left to bloom more on the plant and still have a great vase life, nice to not have to stress about getting the sunflowers at the perfect stage every single day; Well received.

Problems: Took a long time to bloom

(3), longer to bloom than other varieties; Plants never grew more than 6 inches in length, got a tiny bud, then died; The seedlings seemed weaker when small than my other sunflower seedlings (though they grew into strong, healthy plants).

Similar Cultivars: 'Starburst Greenburst'; Similar to 'Goldy Double' with respect to color and bloom form.

'Double Sunking' is a beautiful deep gold double sunflower, and was a huge hit with our farmers' market customers; very forgiving regarding harvest stage which is great—they can be cut very tight or left to bloom more on the plant and still have a great vase life.

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN.

Comments: Great sunflower, the main stems made for fun bunches and the side stems were excellent in mixed bouquets.

Sunflower 'ProCut Peach'

(Sunflower Selections)

Good Qualities: I loved the peachy color! (3); Easy to grow (2); Fit in well with our market bouquets; Everyone loves a sunflower, all ProCut varieties are great; Plants bloomed very quickly! seeded on 3/10, transplanted on 4/13, and first flowers 5/16—30 days from transplant, almost in time for Mother's Day!; Nice, earliest of the Trial sunflowers, some like it, some thought it too pale.

Problems: Doesn't match the name. I would expect a more peachy color



'Double Sunking'

Photo Shannon Jones



'ProCut Peach'

Photo Renee Clayton

(2); A bit wimpy; Flower size smaller for a sunflower than I typically like, diminutive-sized centres (which can be a good thing); Plants never grew more than 6 inches in length, got a tiny bud, then died; The cucumber beetles (and every other pest) loved these petals, I grew plenty of sunflower varieties the bloomed in May-June, and only this one got its petals chomped by pests.

Similar Cultivars: 'Premier Peach'.

Postharvest Recommendations: Same as other sunflowers; CVBN.

Comments: 'ProCut Peach' is a nice sunflower that is a nice variation from gold and yellow.

Sunflower 'Sunrich Orange Summer DMR'

(American Takii)

Good Qualities: Classic bright yellow sunflower with large dark center (2); A nice basic sunflower, we don't have downy mildew so I can't say if it was resistant or not; Strong; Nice, solid sunflower; Disease resistance! classic sunflower form with the addition of good plant health; Consistent bloom window—within 4 days; Tall, uniform plants; Earlier to bloom.

Problems: Nothing really strikingly novel about this variety; Head size was smaller than regular 'Sunrich Orange' blooms; Nothing outstanding.

Similar Cultivars: Appears identical to 'Sunrich Orange Summer' (2), and is comparable with respect to bloom time; 'Sunrich Orange' (2).

Postharvest Recommendations: CVBN; Harvest early morning or evening, I often dry store sunflowers with good results, in this instance I would not place in water but lay stems flat in a box and store in

the cooler between 36-38 F, for fresh use I harvest when petals are just lifting, for dry storage I usually like a bit more open, the neck is usually weak at the earlier bud stage, adding a few more hours is helpful, to rehydrate the dry stems, recut and place in fresh water, they seem to be fine without hydrator added, tried both and no noticeable difference, they are typically ready to use within 90 minutes, surprisingly, they have a longer shelf life than a fresh cut, I'm referring to all suns not just this variety although Sunrich DMR series is the main one we grow.

Comments: Plants never grew more than 6 inches in length, got a tiny bud, then died; We are big fans of the Sunrich series, this one was great and we will add it for next growing season, with the amount of rain that we received this year (30 inches in 8 weeks) this variety is great to have in our toolbox to try to beat Mother Nature!; We had a

lot of downy mildew in our sunflower patch, so the DMR varieties stood out for their vigor and well-formed flowers; Sunrich series is #1 for us, bonus with DMR added feature, days to flower can vary depending on daylength, may take longer for earlier sowings and usually right on for later sowings, after first week of August they take longer to mature, dry stores well, all were sown into 200 cell Speedling trays and hand-planted to field, when sown at same time as 'Sunrich Orange DMR', they bloom a few days earlier which helps with succession production; This was just another orange/deep gold standard sunflower, I'm sure the sunflower connoisseurs out there could really highlight the differences between these "plain" sunflowers, but I can't, I have my favorite ('Vincent') and nothing is ever as perfect as them; I appreciated that it bloomed sooner but the heads were too small, I had it growing next to 'Sunrich Orange' which is my usual variety, planted at the same spacing and the blooms were noticeably smaller, maybe if I spread them out more it would have solved the problem but then I'm giving up more space.



'Sunrich Summer DMR'

Photo Shannon Jones

Tanacetum ‘Orinoco’

(Evanthia)

Good Qualities: Great color—creamy blooms open to gold at the center and have some green tones (5); Great filler (2); Nice look; cute little blooms; Interesting double bloom; I really loved this variety! color that went well with everything, we cut and used it as much as possible, customers love that it doesn’t have a yellow pollen center; Height, strong stems, full flowers filled out bouquets well, colour/bicolour was nice and complemented a lot of different colour palettes; This color is versatile and pairs well with a wide range of other crops and colors when making mixed bouquets, plants are productive, highly uniform and healthy; Nice full spray 4-6 inches wide, beautiful lacy flower heads, major winner in my book—really nice texture and full strong flower heads, dries well also!; Excellent germination and strong growth of seedlings; Our favourite of all the matricaria we grew, excellent germ and vigour, pleasing colour that lasted well, did not brown.

Problems: Short (2), hard to cut; None (2); Pick on time, will go by and brown up quickly; This variety was later than most other *Tanacetum* varieties by as much as 12 days; Young plants seemed especially susceptible to rust infection, after transplanting, the plants really struggled and half died, I did grow them in a hoophouse; We didn’t have great yield, did not grow bushy and tall as we would have liked; Make sure it is netted.

Similar Cultivars: Similar to ‘Magic Lime Green’ (2), but more finely textured petals, and bigger heads and ‘Orinoco’ is later to bloom; Similar to ‘Snowball Improved’, however, the trial variety much superior.

Postharvest Recommendations: Make sure it is mature to prevent premature wilting.

Comments: Field grown, this feverfew was quite short, however, we typically perennialize our feverfew so, I suspect that it will be much taller next year, it got “burnt” by the sun just as it was beginning to bloom because we got it out into the field too late and it didn’t



‘Orinoco’

Photo Susan Wright

appreciate the hot summer sun, the look of the blooms was very nice, all in all, we did not have great success with this item, however, this is likely due to late planting and it being first-year growth so, I suspect that it would do much better under more favorable conditions, thus, I wouldn’t write this cultivar off just because of our lack of success with it this year; Stem length is fairly short when grown in full sun, so in the future I will try adding shade cloth, I was surprised that the colour was so yellow: when I checked on Google the colour looked more creamy-white; Didn’t grow enough!; Overall a great variety and excellent color; We feel the issue was our soil, too wet and high organic material for this plant; We rated this matricaria as the best one yet, the only stems we did not harvest were on the edges of the bed as they were not

netted and were crooked, we sowed this variety twice, a few weeks apart and was equally impressed, today (November 14) the plants are very lush and green and show lots of promise to overwinter, I am hopeful as I do not see it listed by any seed company for purchase 2022, I just wanted to mention the matricaria from 2020 trial ‘Baya’, who I wasn’t impressed with due to the short stem length over wintered here very hardily in 5B with no cover, the stem length this year far exceeded 2021 to a very useful 20-24’, I don’t know if this interests you or not, there never seems to be a follow up on overwintered plants, I was quite surprised at the difference, our winter was good with almost zero winter kill, they were cut in early July and again in mid-August, plants are still looking good today.

Table 1. The first row of data for each cultivar is the average and the second row is the range of responses. Note when only one response is shown in the range line, all respondents gave the same rating.

Species and cultivar	Yield (stems/plant)	Stem length (in.) ¹	Market appreciation rating ²	Ease of cultivation rating ²	Grow again rating ²	Average postharvest life (days)
Aster Azumi XL Blue	7.3 1-18	17.8 12-30	4.0 3-5	2.8 1-5	4.0 1-5	6.5 6-7
Aster Azumi XL Red	6.8 4-10	17.7 12-24	4.3 4-5	3.0 1-5	3.8 1-5	6.5 6-7
Aster Azumi XL Rose	7.3 4-14	15.4 12-20	4.6 4-5	3.7 1-5	4.3 1-5	7.3 7-8
Aster Azumi XL White	6.9 1-18	17.8 12-30	4.4 3-5	3.7 1-5	4.0 1-5	6.5 5-8
Aster Large Flower Light Blue	5.7 1-11	15.0 10-20	4.3 4-5	2.5 1-5	3.8 1-5	7.3 7-10
Aster Mum Deep Purple	6.6 1-18	15.7 12-24	4.3 4-5	3.3 1-5	4.1 1-5	7.4 6-10
Aster Mum Red	3.2 1-9	16.7 12-20	4.5 4-5	2.3 1-4	3.5 1-5	8.5 7-10
Campanula Champion II White	3.7 1-8	20.7 14-30	4.7 4-5	4.7 4-5	4.1 3-5	12.8 7-21
Celosia Act Diva	1.0 1	17.7 3-30	3.0 1-5	2.3 1-5	3.2 1-5	10.0 7-14
Celosia Reprise Velvet	1.2 1-3	21.4 2-60	3.8 1-5	2.9 1-5	3.8 1-5	10.3 7-14
Celosia Sunday Bright Pink Improved	7.1 1-20	16.4 8-29	3.8 1-5	3.8 1-5	4.3 3-5	7.8 6-10
Celosia Sunday Gold Improved	6.2 1-12	16.8 10-30	4.0 3-5	3.9 1-5	4.4 3-5	7.2 6-8
Celosia Sunday Green	6.0 1-15	16.3 10-24	3.3 2-5	3.0 1-5	4.5 3-5	6.7 5-8
Celosia Sunday Purple Improved	5.3 1-10	16.3 8-28	3.6 1-5	3.4 1-5	4.0 1-5	6.7 6-7
Celosia Sunday Yellow Improved	5.7 1-10	18.5 10-30	4.1 2-5	3.2 1-5	4.3 3-5	6.4 5-8
Dianthus Amazon Lavender Magic	7.3 1-12	17.2 12-24	4.6 4-5	4.3 3-5	4.7 4-5	9.6 6-14
Dianthus Sweet Cherry	5.2 1-12	16.2 8-23	4.3 3-5	3.8 2-5	4.3 3-5	5.0 5
Dianthus Sweet Neon Purple	6.8 1-12	17.1 8-24	4.4 3-5	3.8 1-5	4.6 4-5	7.7 6-10
Dianthus Sweet Rose Magic	6.3 1-10	16.7 8-23	4.3 3-5	3.4 1-5	4.5 4-5	10.0 10

Species and cultivar	Yield (stems/plant)	Stem length (in.) ¹	Market appreciation rating ²	Ease of cultivation rating ²	Grow again rating ²	Average postharvest life (days)
Helichrysum Granvia Gold	5.5 1-10	12.0 8-16	3.8 2-5	3.2 1-5	4.6 4-5	13.0 12-14
Helichrysum King Size Frosted Sulphur	5.1 1-14	21.3 12-33	3.8 3-5	3.7 2-5	4.2 2-5	13.3 7-18
Lisianthus Arosa 3 Pure White	2.1 1-5	18.9 12-30	4.1 2-5	3.7 1-5	2.9 1-5	11.1 10-14
Lisianthus Arosa 3 Red	1.7 1-5	18.5 9-30	3.6 2-5	3.0 1-5	3.1 1-5	14.0 14
Lisianthus Can Purple	1.7 1-4	18.2 14-32	4.1 2-5	3.1 1-5	3.3 1-5	12.4 10-14
Lisianthus Celeb 2 Madonna	3.0 1-6	18.7 10-30	4.7 3-5	4.2 2-5	3.3 1-5	12.0 10-14
Lisianthus Corelli Light Lavender	3.1 1-5	14.4 6-20	3.7 1-5	3.3 1-5	3.4 1-5	10.6 7-14
Lisianthus Flare Jade	1.8 1-5	18.2 11-20	4.5 4-5	3.8 3-5	3.2 1-4	10.7 10-14
Lisianthus Flare Yellow	1.9 1-4	17.6 13-20	4.3 3-5	3.4 2-5	3.3 1-4	11.0 10-14
Lisianthus Little Summer 1 Orange	2.0 1-10	14.1 6-28	4.4 3-5	4.1 3-5	3.3 1-5	12.0 10-14
Lisianthus Megalo 3 Orchid	2.3 1-6	17.8 12-30	4.0 2-5	3.2 1-5	3.2 1-5	11.0 7-14
Marigold Devi Deep Gold	7.3 3-12	21.9 12-33	4.2 3-5	4.0 1-5	4.3 2-5	11.7 7-21
Marigold Garuda Deep Gold	8.1 3-12	20.6 12-34	4.3 3-5	4.1 3-5	4.6 4-5	9.3 7-14
Marigold Garuda Yellow Improved	7.4 3-10	21.0 12-34	4.3 3-5	4.4 2-5	4.5 4-5	9.1 7-14
Marigold Mishka Deep Gold	6.6 3-12	20.5 6-36	4.1 3-5	3.8 1-5	4.5 4-5	9.4 7-14
Marigold Narai Orange	6.8 2-10	18.8 12-30	4.0 3-5	3.0 1-5	4.5 3-5	10.6 6-21
Marigold Sumati Orange	7.2 1-16	16.8 8-30	3.9 1-5	2.8 1-5	4.5 3-5	9.1 7-14
Marigold White Swan	6.4 2-12	15.9 12-36	3.4 1-5	2.9 1-5	3.9 2-5	8.9 6-14
Nigella African Bride	5.1 1-19	19.0 8-30	3.7 3-4	3.6 2-5	3.5 3-4	6.7 5-8

Species and cultivar	Yield (stems/plant)	Stem length (in.) ¹	Market appreciation rating ²	Ease of cultivation rating ²	Grow again rating ²	Average postharvest life (days)
Salpiglossis Café au Lait	2.5 1-5	11.7 8-17	2.3 1-4	2.0 1-5	3.0 1-5	5.3 3-7
Snapdragon Costa Summer Lavender IV	3.8 1-6	25.8 18-47	4.2 2-5	4.4 3-5	4.0 2-5	8.0 8
Snapdragon Legend Yellow Improved	3.7 1-6	21.6 14-30	3.1 1-5	2.7 1-5	4.2 3-5	7.7 5-10
Snapdragon Maryland Rose	4.8 2-10	22.7 14-30	4.2 1-5	4.1 1-5	4.6 4-5	8.5 6-12
Snapdragon Potomac Pink Dark	4.8 1-18	26.8 12-30	4.4 1-5	4.6 1-5	4.3 1-5	7.6 5-21
Snapdragon Potomac Pink Improved	3.9 2-10	25.9 18-41	4.3 3-5	3.9 1-5	4.1 3-5	6.7 5-7
Stock Canneto White	1.0 1	20.2 10-28	4.6 4-5	4.2 1-5	4.2 2-5	11.3 6-21
Stock Milla Light Pink	1.0 1	18.6 12-26	4.3 3-5	4.5 3-5	4.5 2-5	13.7 10-21
Sunflower Double Sunking	1.8 1-4	36.0 8-62	4.8 4-5	4.0 1-5	4.5 2-5	8.3 7-10
Sunflower ProCut Peach	1.0 1	39.5 24-45	3.9 3-5	3.1 1-5	4.1 2-5	7.3 7-8
Sunflower Sunrich Orange Summer DMR	1.0 1	42.0 24-60	4.5 3-5	3.8 1-5	4.7 2-5	8.3 7-10
Tanacetum Orinoco	4.1 1-10	16.0 8-24	3.6 1-5	3.5 1-5	4.0 2-5	8.8 5-12

¹Data shown are from the respondents who harvested stems. Some Trialers may have not harvest stems because they were too short. The stems, not the Trialers.

²1 to 5 scale with 5 being the best; market appreciation ratings are based on sales to wholesalers, retailers and/or final consumers.

2021 ASCFG Perennial Trial Report

John Dole and Judy Laushman

Photo Renee Clayton

In the second year of the 2020 Perennial Trial, two of the three top-scoring cultivars were kniphofias, also known as red-hot poker. With long, strong spikes and bright colors, these South African natives make an impact in bouquets and designs. *Kniphofia* 'Lucky Lemon' produced 25 stems per plant, and *Kniphofia* 'Flashpoint' about 14 stems/plant. For both, the stems were 18-24 inches long. In 2021, stems were longer and there were about double the number of the first year. For those new to kniphofias, be aware that the lower florets turn brown as they age, making it tricky to harvest, as you need the spikes to be well colored, but before the lower florets turn brown. A quick shake of stems while harvesting can dislodge some of the brown ones.

The final top three-scoring cultivar was *Phlox* 'Fashionably Early Crystal', lauded for its productivity, 16 stems per plant, and long stems, 18-30 inches. One Trialer commented, "I can't rave enough about this plant! It's an addictive flower to have if you're a farmer-florist doing event work or if you're selling to florists who do weddings." See the comments section for more accolades.

Penstemon 'Onyx and Pearls' did well with an average of 14 flowering stems per plant that ranged from 15 to 24 inches long. One distinctive advantage is that the seed capsules are also attractive, along with the dark foliage: "And if you miss the flowers, the dark seed heads are also beautiful, and dry well, for great texture material."

As anyone growing baptisias will tell you, they can take a while to get rolling. Of the four respondents, three had 'Plum Rosy' plants that flowered and one was still waiting. For those with flowering plants, it was clearly a winner. One Trialer commented, "Gosh, the color is spectacular! Also, I am so excited about the foliage, too! It's a great shade of blue-green, and more upright/rigid than some of my (many) other baptisia varieties."

Based on the combined ratings score (market appreciation + repeat again + ease of cultivation), the following top-ranked cultivars will be nominated for the ASCFG Cut Flower of the Year: *Kniphofia* 'Lucky Lemon', *Kniphofia* 'Flashpoint', and *Phlox* 'Fashionably Early Crystal'.

Interpreting the trial results: The numbers reported are averages of all the respondents, and many factors will affect the success of any cultivar. Our participants grow and harvest trial plants using several methods. After looking at the average, check the range of responses listed below each number to see how the cultivar performed at its best and its worst. If the range of responses in the ratings is narrow and high, i.e., 3-5 or 4-5, the plant was a winner for most of the respondents and is likely to do well for you. The 'Repeat Again Rating' is particularly important because it indicates if the Trialer would take the time, money, and space to actually grow the cultivar again. Review the trial results carefully. If a variety sounds interesting, but did not appear to do well, try it anyway—it may work well for you.

Acknowledgments: Thank you to each of the four evaluators who returned their trial reports! We very much appreciate the time it takes to participate in the trials. We want to especially thank **Jennie Love** from Love ‘n Fresh Flowers for being the first Trialer to return evaluations. Thank you to Walters Gardens for providing the plant materials. In preparing the report we did a bit of editing of the comments for space and clarity; our apologies if we’ve altered the tone or content of anyone’s comments.

Summary of Comments. The number in the parentheses is the number of Trialers who made the same comment. Comments from different individuals are separated by a “;”. Note: many respondents did not make specific comments on each cultivar, and in a few cases, comments have been shortened because of limited space.

Photos: This year Rachael Ackerman, Renee Clayton, and Jennie Love sent several wonderful photos—thank you!

Participating Company

Walters Gardens
Zeeland, Michigan
www.WaltersGardens.com

Participating Trialers

Renee Clayton
Wild Scallions Farm
Timberlake, NC
Zone 7

Michelle Elston
Roots Cut Flower Farm
Carlisle, PA
Zone 6b

John Dole
NC State University
Raleigh, NC
Zone 7b

Jennie Love
Love ‘n Fresh Flowers
Philadelphia, PA
Zone 7

Year 2 Results

Achillea ‘Firefly Diamond’

Good Qualities: Robust stems, no need to stake or support plants (3).

Problems: None; Large, ivory-colored flower heads are difficult to use in arrangements and the color is simply rather blah.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Postharvest Recommendations: 10-day vase life.

Achillea ‘Peter Cottontail’

Good Qualities: Bushy, full stems bulk up a bouquet nicely; Nice button form.

Problems: Died out after seemingly getting really well established the first year and even flowering some towards the end of last season, it’s a bummer because I really did think it had a lot of potential, not sure if it’s not winter hardy in Zone 7? can’t imagine that it’s not, we had a lot of snow this past winter, which is unusual for us, these were planted in a raised bed so drainage was not the issue; Feverfew blooms at the same time! and is way more productive and vigorous.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: I feel like it’s similar to ‘The Pearl’; Looks more like a baby’s breath than a yarrow.

Postharvest Recommendations: 7-day vase life.



‘Sassy Summer Lemon’

Photo Jennie Love

Comments: A useful flower to have around, but not terribly productive; Dried fairly well.

Achillea ‘Sassy Summer Lemon’

Good Qualities: Eye-catching shade of yellow (3), fairly popular for events; It was SO productive!, flowers held well on the plant so we could pick them as needed over a couple weeks, were planted right next to the ‘Peter Cottontail’, which nearly all died out, but this cultivar made it through the rough winter like a champ; Small- to medium-sized flower heads are easy to design with and plants are very productive.

Problems: Not as vigorous or productive as ‘Moonshine’.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: ‘Coronation Gold’ is really similar I feel, but I like the yellow of this one more for some reason, the shading difference is subtle, but it does make a difference when mixing this bloom with other tones; ‘Moonshine’, None.

Postharvest Recommendations: 5-10 day vase life.

Comments: A great May-blooming perennial!; Sunny disposition and easy to grow!

Astilbe ‘Purple Candles’

Good Qualities: It’s the first astilbe cultivar I’ve gotten to be happy at my farm (I’ve tried a lot), I’m not sure if that’s an attribute of the cultivar or if I finally picked a good spot for them (growing on the north/shaded side of my hoop house where it gets a lot of moisture as well as protection in the winter), in any case, it seems like a really tough plant.

Problems: Not sure I’m loving the color, as a designer, I found it hard to figure out what to mix this shade of purple-red with, especially at that time of the season, the color is on the cooler side, which meant it didn’t play well with warm shades, but now that I know I will have this in my mix of spring blooms, I’ll plant more cool-toned flowers to pair with it, not a hard problem to solve.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: There are a lot of red astilbe that look pretty similar to this one.



Photo Renee Clayton



Photo Jennie Love

Postharvest Recommendations: Only good for event work as they started to look dirty/less lovely after 3-4 days in the vase, held really well in the cooler, though, and I could keep them for weddings for 2 weeks after cutting.

Comments: It's a keeper!

Baptisia 'Plum Rosy'

Good Qualities: Nice lavender/dusty purple color, unsure about foliage quality; Great muted rosy color equally good for events or farmers' market, strong robust plant growth; Gosh, the color is spectacular! also, I am so excited about the foliage too! it's a great shade of blue-green and more upright/rigid than some of my (many) other baptisia varieties, I think this cultivar is going to be a standout!!! eager for it to hit its stride in another year or two.

Problems: Need a few more years for more information; None.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None (2).

Similar Cultivars: I grow a lot of baptisia and I haven't seen one quite this color before. It's unique.

Postharvest Recommendations: 10 day-vase life.

Comments: Generally takes us a few years to determine best baptisias since they are so slow to establish, we did appreciate the unique bloom color of this one; Give me 100 more!

Kniphofia 'Lucky Lemons'

Good Qualities: Robust plant growth and extremely productive! Flowers are a pale creamy yellow, quite popular now.

Problems: Typical lower floret browning issue.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: None.

Postharvest Recommendations: Use a holding solution.

Comments: The productivity and popularity of these plants just kept surprising



Photo Rachael Ackerman



Photo John Dole

me! This trial really taught me to appreciate kniphofia, and they provide a great spike shape in the middle of summer when you really need one again.

Kniphofia PYROMANIA 'Flashpoint'

Good Qualities: Tall flowers, easy to harvest, robust plant growth.

Problems: Bottom flowers on stem tended to discolor if not harvested promptly.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: Very similar in color and growth to 'Lucky Lemons' kniphofia.

Comments: I think this variety will be just as productive as 'Lucky Lemons' next year, the two are very similar, for being a pastel color, these flowers developed quite a following at the farmers' market (for the month they bloomed anyway).



Photo Jennie Love

Penstemon 'Onyx and Pearls'

Good Qualities: Flowers have a great wildflower look, attract pollinators and beneficials, and the foliage is beautiful year round, seed heads can also be harvested and sold; Interesting light/dark contrast of petals and sepals and stems, nice for "moody" spring design work, nice textural plant, seems to be very drought tolerant and vigorous; I feel like this beauty is just getting started! It's a robust and elegant plant that smothers out any weeds in the bed so that's a delight, the flowers are a lovely and delicate/sophisticated touch in designs, especially for wedding work, stems are rigid and straight, the seed heads are super cool too if you can manage to not cut all the flowers.

Problems: Some support is beneficial, spent flowers sometimes need to be combed off stem; Short bloom window, we don't have much demand for very dainty flowers (or patience in harvesting them!!); None.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: Nope, seems really unique.

Postharvest Recommendations: 4-5 days.

Comments: This is a great cut flower! it doesn't have a long harvest window, but a wealth of stems for two weeks, and if you miss the flowers, the dark seed heads are also beautiful, and dry well, for great texture material; I adore this plant and hope lots of other flower farmers give it a try, too!

The Cut Flower Quarterly

Phlox LUMINARY 'Opalescence'

Good Qualities: Lovely pale pink flower.

Problems: Plants need extra care, mulching, and weeding.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Comments: Come bloom time, I only had two surviving plants of this variety! They were lovely, but the plants are clearly not thriving.

Phlox 'Fashionably Early Crystal'

Good Qualities: Bloomed very early (for Mother's Day here!), also had a very decent second round of side stems a month later; I can't rave enough about this plant! As a wedding designer, it is the bomb for centerpieces—blossoms just when there's that pesky void in the June line-up of "bigger" flowers that are needed to fill out a centerpiece, the color is perfect, the stems sturdy, the plants re-flushed! I got an amazing second cutting in midsummer and there's a spotty third flush happening right now in late summer but I won't cut that as I don't want to deplete the plants, but it's really impressive how much they bloom.

Problems: None.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: Very similar to a white sweet William; There are other white phlox, but none that bloom this early, and that's the real reason to grow this cultivar over others.

Postharvest Recommendations: Ten-day vase life.



Photo Renee Clayton



'Glamour Girl'

Photo John Dole

Comments: Great cut flower at a good time on tall strong stems; I loved this one so much that I bought 50 more from Walter's and I'll probably buy another 50 soon, it's an addictive flower to have if you're a farmer-florist doing event work or if you're selling to florist who do weddings.

Phlox 'Glamour Girl'

Good Qualities: Similar to 'Early Crystal', this phlox is a keeper and puts out multiple flushes in the season, which is wonderful, really vibrant color! Nothing else quite like it out in the field, gets a lot of attention from farm visitors; Good coral color which is popular right now; Great warm pink flower color, robust stems.

Problems: I realllllly like this plant and the color, but it's been almost impossible to mix with any other colors because it is so darn vibrant, the only color it goes really well with is orange, but unfortunately it blooms at a time of year when there really isn't much orange in my fields, wish it came earlier to be with orange tulips or later to be with orange zinnias; We dislike phlox in general for our humid climate, also, too thirsty/intolerant of dry conditions, petal drop soon after harvest, like most phlox; Not real robust plants, need extra care, mulching and weeding.

Notable Insects and Diseases: None.

Similar Cultivars: None.

Postharvest Recommendations: 3-4 day vase life.

Comments: If you and your customers like bold-in-your-face-bright, this is an excellent flower to grow!

Table 1. Year two results for plants received 2020. The first row of data for each cultivar is the average, and the second row is the range of responses. Note when only one response is shown in the range line, all respondents gave the same rating.

Species Cultivar	Plant survival from previous year (%)	Plants flowering (%)	Yield (stems/ plant)	Stem length (in.) ¹	Market appreciation rating ²	Ease of cultivation rating ²	Grow again rating ²
Achillea Firefly Diamond	100 100	100 100	13.3 8-20	16.5 15-18	3.5 3-4	5.0 5	4.0 3-5
Achillea Peter Cottontail	75 0-100	100 100	6.5 5-8	14.0 12-16	3.5 3-4	3.3 1-5	1.7 1-3
Achillea Sassy Summer Lemon	100 100	100 100	17.3 5-37	16.3 15-18	3.7 2-5	5.0 5	3.3 1-5
Astilbe Purple Candles	100 100	100 100	9.0 9	15.0 15	3.5 3-4	4.5 4-5	3.5 3-4
Baptisia Plum Rosy	100 100	88 50-100	3.5 1-6	18.0 12-24	4.7 4-5	4.3 3-5	4.3 3-5
Kniphofia Lucky Lemons	100 100	100 100	25.0 25	21.0 21	4.5 4-5	5.0 5	4.5 4-5
Kniphofia PYROMANIA Flashpoint	100 100	100 100	13.8 5-20	21.0 18-24	4.5 4-5	4.5 4-5	4.5 4-5
Penstemon Onyx and Pearls	100 100	100 100	7.5 5-10	24.0 24	4.7 4-5	4.7 4-5	4.0 2-5
Phlox Fashionably Early Crystal	100 100	100 100	16.0 12-20	21.0 18-30	5.0 5	4.5 4-5	5.0 5
Phlox Glamour Girl	73 40-100	100 100	5.2 4-9	16.8 12-26	3.3 2-4	3.0 1-5	3.0 1-4
Phlox LUMINARY Opalescence	75 50-100	100 100	4.0 4	18.0 18	4.5 4-5	4.0 3-5	4.0 3-5

¹Data shown are from the respondents who harvested stems. Some Trialers may have not harvested stems because they were too short. The stems, not the Trialers.

²1 to 5 scale with 5 being the best; market appreciation ratings are based on sales to wholesalers, retailers, and/or final consumers.



Opening Your Farm to the Public: Is it Right for You?

Whether you're hosting pick-your-own days, farm tours or workshops, welcoming the public to your farm brings a host of benefits—and potential problems. Glean advice you can use from flower growers who have already rolled out the red carpet to on-farm customers.

Learn the basics of inviting the public to your farm. Growers who are already doing it share wisdom about benefits, hidden costs, insurance advice, and event ideas based on their combined 50-plus years of experience.

Julie Martens Forney

Photo Theresa Schumilas, Garden Party Flower Farm

Customers—wholesale and retail alike—love visiting flower farms. The fields of color are irresistible and fill visitors with a sense of awe. Jamie Rohda, owner of Harvest Home Flowers in Waverly, Nebraska, sells to wholesale florists. She typically hosts one annual open house evening, but this past year road-tested some pick-your-own events.

“After people visited the farm, we’d get texts and emails that said things like, ‘That was amazing.’ ‘I’d come out every day and work for free—I just love being there.’ Or my favorite, ‘You could charge 10 times as much and I’d come out even if I didn’t get the flowers.’” Rohda realized pretty quickly that “for most people, it wasn’t even about the flowers. It was more the experience—not how many stems did I get.”

Theresa Schumilas, owner of Garden Party Flower Farm in St. Agatha, Ontario, thrives on hearing the reaction from customers when they first visit the farm. “Our flowers are mostly hidden from the road, tucked behind some fields. When I show pick-your-own visitors where to go and they find themselves standing in an acre of flowers, they just say, ‘Wow.’ It’s so rewarding,” she says.

Because Schumilas sells mainly wholesale through an online marketplace to designers, she doesn’t interact with the customers who are picking up her flowers. “I don’t get that instant feedback,” she says. “I rely on that wow from my pick-your-own customers to keep me going. That’s why I keep doing it.”

Woo Visitors with Workshops and Plants

While pick-your-own flowers might be the most common way to bring guests to your farm, it's not the only option. At Three Toads Farm in Winchester, Kentucky, Val Schirmer has created an on-farm following with bulb workshops and seedling sales. "When I first started this, I thought about doing pick-your-own, but realized I didn't want people showing up unexpectedly to the farm—it's our home. So for the last six to seven years we've done workshops and pop-up sales," she says.

A highlight of her workshop topics focuses on one of Schirmer's specialties: forced bulbs. "I started forcing bulbs for a high-end antique and garden show that's the first weekend in March. I've been doing that since 2003, forcing about 6,000 bulbs in deep 6-packs," she says. But forcing bulbs for one weekend is tough, so a few years ago Schirmer started doing 2-hour spring bulb garden workshops in February to balance the work a bit.

"Now I have people wanting to do private workshops," she shares. "This year I'm not doing the garden show—I'm doing all workshops at the farm."



Val Schirmer of Three Toads Farm forces amaryllis and paperwhites. She's started a workshop on winter bulb forcing for commercial growers.

She's also taken her forced bulb workshop on the road, debuting her spring bulb gardens version at a brunch held at a popular local wedding venue. That workshop for 40 sold out in an hour.

She also hosts a winter flower school on the farm, an all-day event. "It's everything I know about forcing bulbs—amaryllis and paperwhites for tabletop gardens. I limit it to 10 people. For \$385, they do four projects," she says. "I think once you make the reputation for having great flowers, people really want what you have." Now she's setting her sights on cultivating a commercial grower workshop base. "I did a bulb forcing workshop for commercial growers this past fall and it was SO much fun," she says. "I think there's an opportunity there."

Schumilas has also found great success with on-farm workshops. "It's very much still an experiment in progress, but I find that my customers really respond to foraging workshops. We have two acres of sugar maple forest with meadows, so we have beautiful natural places to walk," she says. A fall seed-saving foraging walk is a hit with customers. "People just wander around with little envelopes, bags, and containers. I give them clues first by taking them on a tour. I tell them which ones are easy to grow, ones I wouldn't bother with, ones that come back each year—things like that. Then they gather their seeds," she says.

A winter wreath foraging workshop includes evergreens harvested on site, which Schumilas pre-gathers and piles outside the barn work area, just to save time. Attendees forage for materials like branches, lichens, fungi, and seed pods under the direction of a local wedding floral designer Schumilas partners with for the event. "On the foraging walk, the designer points out things that



A wreath foraging workshop at Garden Party Farm, Ontario, fills fast. Owner Theresa Schumilas partners with a local wedding designer to coach attendees on foraging for and creating their wreaths.

would make great wreath additions, and then we both coach people through the wreath-making process," she says. Attendees easily make \$200 wreaths and enjoy a day on the farm, complete with hot apple cider.

In spring, Schumilas hosts a seedling sale featuring plants for a cut flower patch. Schirmer does the same thing. "People want what flower farmers grow, so we offer home gardeners a chance to buy our specialty cut flower seeds or seedlings," she says. "We did this last May as a four-hour pop-up event, and it was almost overwhelming." Her secret? Create a collection and give it a name, like "Cutting Garden Collection."

Schirmer posted availability on Instagram, and customers could pre-order, which means pre-buy. She sells super jumbo deep 6-packs for anywhere from \$12 (cosmos, zinnias, marigolds), to \$20 (Scoop scabiosa). Crops include everything from lisianthus—including new Japanese varieties for \$18 per 6-pack—to nasturtiums (a Cincinnati



As a first-time pick-your-own farmer, Jamie Rohda, Harvest Home Flowers, Nebraska, worried if she'd have enough flowers to fill out bouquets. "The day after an event, we couldn't even tell anyone had harvested anything," she said. "Having enough for people to pick was never a problem."

florist drove 80 miles to get some of those). "Any time we do something like this, people are buying something that's not a bedding plant. It's not blooming—it's just 6 inches tall," she shares. She prepares a color handout (cost per page: 80 cents) of everything being offered, including detailed information on planting and care.

"Last year, we had \$4,000 of pre-sales, which is a fortune, especially at that time of year. The day of the sale we sold another \$1,600 to \$1,800," she says. She also sold seeds in coin envelopes, but people went for the pricier plants. "I was really overwhelmed, but now a lot of customers are coming back, so that's good," she adds. In terms of time invested, it took the time to set up for the actual sale, plus another day before the sale to package the pre-orders up.

Work Bees Get the Jobs Done

Some growers have found success in opening their farms for work trade programs—customers work for a few hours in exchange for flowers, seeds, or whatever. Schumilas calls these events Work Bees, borrowing terminology from a quilting bee. "I cap the interest at 8 or 10 spots, or I would have more people than I can manage," she shares.

She arranges her work bees around big projects, like early spring weeding in the perennial or herb patch, or planting lisianthus. People typically work for two hours and then break and chat. "They always have lots of questions about various things. They take home plants, cut flowers, or a mix," she says.

For instance, in spring, when folks are cleaning out perennial beds, Schumilas lets them dig what they want—divisions of astilbe or iris, for instance. "That way I don't have to prepare anything for them to take," she says. One of her most popular work bees is autumn dahlia digging. "I let them take tubers with them, which is good, because I never have enough room to store all the dahlias," she laughs.

Gretchen Langston, owner of Blooms Colorado in northern Colorado, has historically done work trade: a day of labor at the farm in exchange for a flower CSA subscription. Langston is a career risk manager who's been growing flowers for the last 5 years on tough Colorado terrain. She offers solid advice to flower farmers who are hosting the public on-site for work days—or any events.

"In order for individuals to come for a work trade day or events on the farm, it's important to have them sign an acknowledgement of risk before the actual event day," she shares. "Waivers of liability do not hold up well in today's

litigation climate. You can't really ask someone to waive all liability when they don't truly know what type of hazards or perceived negligence might arise. What holds up in court is an acknowledgement of risk, where you list the obvious hazards." At Blooms Colorado, the significant risks are "rugged topography and significant wildlife pressure, aka rattlesnakes," per Langston.

Prior to growing flowers, Schumilas raised and sold organic vegetables for 30-plus years. "For me, insurance is key. I carry extra liability insurance for visitors to the farm. In addition, I have written procedures to mitigate risks so I can prove due diligence if anything happens," she says. Think worst-case scenario at this point. "A child slips, lands on a fence post holding up support netting and loses an eye. Or a woman wearing flip flops slips down a hill and pulls a tendon. If there was an incident like this, I would lose everything I've built—my home, pensions, etc."

Langston agrees. "As the host of an event, liability is significantly limited when you fulfill your duty to warn. You can mitigate loss so much with signage and warnings—and this includes having it on your website. If you have all the information on your site about the farm, when to come and all the other necessities, but have no paragraph about risk, you need to address that."

She says it can be a simple statement along the lines of, "Your safety on our farm is paramount to us. We want you to come and have a wonderful experience and go home safely. In order to do this, we ask you to stay on marked paths. If an area is blocked off, do not go there. Do not hand pruners or other adult-intended tools to children. Etc."

Having a statement like this helps to protect you if a situation occurs and goes to litigation. "If you have customers purchasing admission through your website, you should have safety information there. It can be as similar to the many ways websites have incorporated information about COVID changes over the last year, adding a statement in bold or red type. Remember, the easiest claim to manage is no claim at all," Langston adds.

Infrastructure Workarounds

For many growers who host workshops, tours or pick-your-own, one limiting factor is infrastructure. At Three Toads Farm, Schirmer's workshops really had room to grow once they knocked down an old machine shop on the property and turned it into Boggs Cottage. "It's where we do workshops now, and also serves as a guesthouse and poolhouse—it's totally multifaceted," she says.

At Harvest Home Flowers, Rohda's events take place outdoors. "My barn is a working barn, and it's not that big, so we focus on small things that we can do outside. We did finish a 10 x 10 foot room in the barn last year for a little store. I stock it with things related to the farm: our honey, dried flowers, pressed flower art, succulents, vases, things like that. It's really cute," she says.

"We're a working farm, so we're growing on as much land as we can, which means we don't have a lot of parking," she shares. "My husband helps with that, which he enjoys." Once cars are corralled, pick-your-own visitors start their event at the store, which helps generate sales, before heading to a tent outside the barn where Rohda provides clippers, and white pitchers filled with water. The tent pulls double duty as a source of shade and a work space, where guests can arrange their flowers after picking. A quick farm tour shows guests the one-acre flower field and perennials areas where they can cut.

"What makes our farm so appealing is that there are plantings throughout areas that aren't in the garden per se," Rohda explains. "I was going to have one garden for pick-your-own, but people really enjoy walking around to the different gardens. So we can't really have an honor system or self-service. One of us has to be around to show people where they can cut—a clematis vine here or a hydrangea bush there."

Her ideal event formula is 20 to 25 bouquets picked in an evening time slot that's billed as "Sunset on the Farm. I can market it as a date night, which

people like. The natural fading light helps end the day, and at the end, my husband and I usually just look at each other and feel it was fun, relaxing, and not physically exhausting."

The trial run this year has been positive enough that Rohda is planning to drop one of her wholesale routes next year and go all-in on pick-your-own. "We plan to offer picking more times of the week, including the potential for a private evening with the farmer for groups of 10 or more. We tried that this year and found that the private groups are actually easier, because we can explain how it works and show the group where to pick one time," she says.

"Part of the experience for everyone is having the farmer on hand to answer questions. That may make it less profitable for us, but we enjoy it. It reminds us of all those years we sold at farmers' market. The part of that we miss is customer interaction." Other changes she's making include upcycling pallets to build little tables for people to set their pitchers on while they're picking, and creating some kind of area in the shade garden to host private groups. "We'll eventually make a patio with a structure, adding it to the slab from an old foundation of a hog barn," she explains. A true farmer, she's working with the resources at hand.

Another way to host events without adding infrastructure is to develop partnerships with local businesses. With her Colorado wildlife challenges, Langston isn't willing to take on the premise's liability involved in having workshops



Jamie Rohda, Harvest Home Flowers, Nebraska, invested in white pitchers from Ikea for pick-your-own guests to carry flowers. She offered an option to buy the vase; 75 percent of visitors did.

at the farm, so she partners with a local venue like Wolverine Public House in Fort Collins, the closest town. "They have an upper area of the silo barn that's great for workshops. Folks love the on-farm experience, but ours is so remote that hosting events in town is the best answer," she says.

When partnering with another venue, she purchases "general liability insurance with significant coverage. In the risk management world we call it '2-2 coverage' and it provides \$2 million per occurrence and \$2 million in aggregate. If someone is hurt at the partner venue, we want to insure we have that off-premises liability. The reason for this is because if someone attending is hurt during a workshop that we're hosting, we would be likely be named if a liability lawsuit asserting negligence arose. Always make sure you have premises liability."

The Cost of Opening to the Public

When it comes to costs, growers don't typically see huge outlays of cash to host events. Most advertise on social media with great results.

But allowing visitors can lead to a common problem: uninvited guests. Schumilas suggests thinking through your feelings about privacy before letting anyone visit. "If you're a private person, don't do it. Even with a sign that says 'Closed,' people will drop by. You can't put that genie back in the bottle."

Are any hidden expenses incurred when hosting pick-your-own or events? For Schirmer, the only hidden expense is her time—"the time to set up because you're having company and of course, the time involved with the event versus doing something else that needs done. But when you're the face of the business, you need to be there talking to people."

For her pick-your-own events, Rohda wanted guests to have a visually inspiring experience, so she invested in white Ikea pitchers for visitors to take to the field. "We gave people the option to buy the pitchers, and I really underestimated how many people would do that. This year 75 percent of people bought pitchers! I had to keep ordering—I placed seven orders over the summer," she says. "That wasn't a big deal, but it took time."

Schumilas admits that pick-your-own events can lead to ruined flower beds. "People don't cut things low enough, and they leave a mess. You have to have lots of flowers or you won't have any to sell anywhere else." But that isn't the only price she's paid for hosting the public on her farm. This year she experienced a theft of newly planted bush cherries. The theft in itself wasn't a large dollar value, but knowing someone came on her property in the dead of night to dig up plants is unsettling. She's had guests on her farm for over 30 years, and theft has never been an issue.

The whole thing has made her rethink how she allows visitors to take photos on the farm. "I suspect that's what led to the theft," she says. "It's made me realize that we're allowing people to post pictures of our private

spaces, and there's no way to control that. Everyone who comes on the farm has a cell phone. Who doesn't want a selfie in a field of flowers? Those posted photos are a great promotion for me, and it's one reason people come. I may have to be stricter in terms of where I let people take photos and what they shoot."

One other cost that's easily overlooked relates to insurance. Langston advises all growers who host pick-your-own or on-farm or off-farm workshops to disclose those events to your insurance underwriter. "What you need is a commercial general liability policy. If you fail to mention that you have people on the farm or host events elsewhere, you could end up with some kind of exclusion in the policy that you hadn't anticipated," she says. Where would you find that exclusion? Buried in fine print, likely in an attached endorsement.

"For on-farm events that involve third parties assisting with the event, such as a band or food vendor, the proper thing to do is to require them to evidence to you that they have insurance. They should provide you with the certificate of insurance that lists you as an additional insured as respects that one event," Langston explains. "This is what protects you as a farmer when someone trips over an electrical cord and breaks their hip. It sounds ridiculous until it's not, and then it's a catastrophe."

Do Benefits Outweigh Risks?

Every grower agreed that they enjoy hosting the public on their farms. For Rohda, customer interaction is something she enjoys. More than that, she's at a stage of life where having a less rigid schedule lets her enjoy nearby grandchildren. "With a wholesale account, there's no flexibility—you can't just skip a week. But the pick-your-own business model is completely different. We can schedule events around our lives. It also is less physically taxing, something we're thinking about more and more," she laughs.

Generating income is another benefit of workshops and pick-your-own, but make sure you crunch your numbers.



At Harvest Home Flowers, Nebraska, owner Jamie Rohda found that many families came to enjoy Sunset on the Farm. While mothers would pick flowers, fathers would often take children to play on a swing set on the property.

"For me, subscriptions or CSA sales help more with cash flow because you get that large amount up front. On-the-farm events and pick-your-own provide supplemental income, like decoration on the icing on the cake," Schumilas says.

"Selling wholesale is much easier and moves way more flowers. But I love those 'wow' moments of pick-your-own days. I've also always thrived on selling what I grow in ways that build community, and on-farm events do that."

What surprises Schirmer most about having visitors on the farm is "how much they want to connect with you, how much they want to see where and how you do what you do. I'm always embarrassed—this place is not a showplace. But they don't care, and that makes me feel good."

Julie Martens Forney is an avid gardener and freelance writer who's been writing about flower and plant production, horticulture research and consumer gardening for over 30 years.

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Three Simple Rules for Writing Copy for Your Website

“You’re the folks famous for your flower farm,” the man said.

He was a tiling contractor working on our farm’s bed and breakfast. He just arrived, introduced himself, and proved that he had done his research on us.

You see, the notion that our flower farm is “famous” didn’t come around by accident. He didn’t read about us in *People* magazine and he certainly didn’t see me on the cover of *Vogue*.

No. He went to our website, where his opinion was shaped and formed exactly the way we wanted it to be.

It’s a powerful force. In fact, it’s not a stretch to say the words on your website can make or break your business. Too often, small business owners spend most of their online effort creating the prettiest site, with lots of features and unique pages. That’s fine. But test after test proves it’s the words on the site that matter most.

I know because I’ve written millions of those words—and suffered the pain when they don’t hit their mark.

Fortunately, there are some simple rules to follow when it comes to writing copy for your website. Stick to them and I promise your words will work. Your site will convert better. You’ll get more business. And your customers will be enthusiastic and excited about what you do.



Andy Snyder

Done right, the act is nearly magical.

While an entire course could—and should—be taught on the nuances of web copy, there are just three main rules to follow. Focus on just one of them and you’ll have better copy than 90% of small-business sites on the web. Nail all three, and you’ll own a powerful magic wand that makes sales seem to appear out of thin air.

Voilà!

The first idea aims at something I see all the time. As a young copywriter, it was a mistake I made often. It’s easy to do, especially because we see it everywhere and assume if everybody is doing it that it must work.

I bet you’ve been on a site that prominently says these horrific words, “We here at [enter business name] believe in...”

Oh my.

I’ll be blunt. No prospective customer wants to know what you believe in. Or, at least, they don’t want to read about it. That’s something you show them through your words and actions. It’s not something you tell them.

That’s a huge difference.

Instead, the very first words a visitor to your site should see must be about them. You have to solve *their* problem. Entice them with something stunning. Invite them along for a wonderful journey. Just don’t make it about you. They don’t care.

Imagine going to a car company’s website and the first copy you see is about the company, the CEO’s dog or the backstory behind it all. You’d be clicking away in an instant.

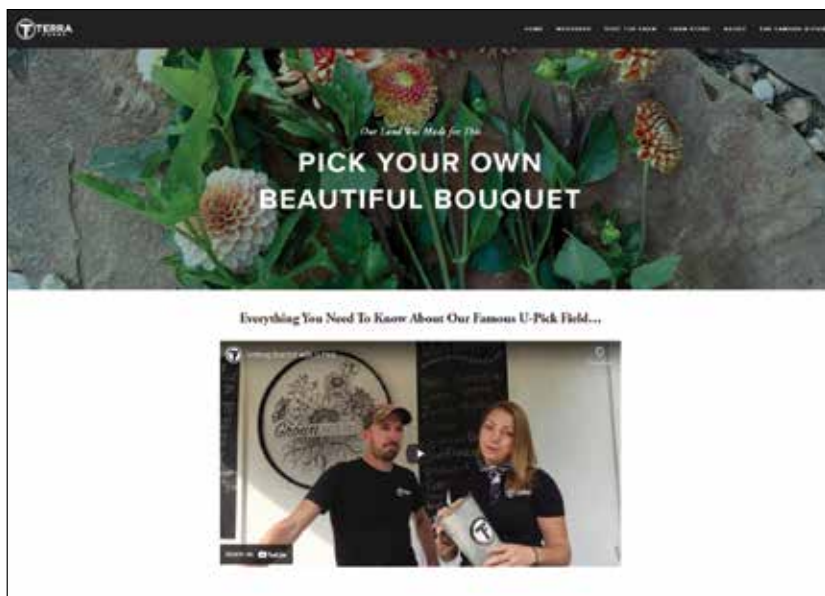
Instead, we want to see what discounts they’re offering, what new features are

available, and what custom add-ons we can get with our hot new car.

When we go to a website, we’re looking to make our life better or easier. The site must meet that need. Display your products. Show what’s new. And give the visitor something to get excited about—something that convinces them their life will get a lot better if they just give you a few bucks.

Yes, it’s true that what makes most flower growers unique is their backstory and how they got to do what they’re doing. All of our stories are unique. Just put that copy deeper on your site. The really engaged folks will read it. But, sorry, most don’t care.

So what do you put front and center? This one is easy—at least if you’ve been in business for a bit.



Solve All Their Problems

To know the very first thing prospective customers must see when they visit your site, think back about the last 10 phone calls you've received. Go into your inbox and look at the last 30 or so emails from current or new customers.

What are they asking? What are some of the common themes?

Again, I bet they're not asking about your story or what you believe in. Instead, they're asking about availability, your hours, your location or if you offer a certain service.

Lots of folks have "frequently asked questions" pages on their site. That's great. They're important. But the most-frequent inquiries must be answered right up front, right on your homepage.

For flower growers, it's easy. You can display some satisfying pictures of what you produce (not bucolic pictures of your farm) and then link to a page that lists what's currently available. I guarantee it will be your most-clicked link.

But not everybody is there to buy flowers right away. Perhaps a florist simply wants to know how to do business with you. That's a common question, right? And you certainly want to answer it quickly and efficiently.

So right below the pictures of what you grow (which, by the way, is your real "about" copy), you can have a brief blurb about why it's so easy to work with you. Again, like the car company, show your unique features, your oh-so-smart pricing model and offer them a link that leads to a page that makes it easy to get started.

You can see where this is going. With just two small blurbs, we've already given the prospective customer two very important things. They know what you do and they know how to do business with you.

They haven't seen pictures of you... your farm... your dog... or how "at [enter company name] you believe [enter latest cliché buzz words]." They don't care.

Remember, they didn't search the web for details about you. They searched the web because they had a problem they needed to solve.

Now that we've got the easy stuff taken care of, let's get into the real moneymaker: the copy trick that helps the pros make ten times more than the average keyboard hacker.

Cut it Out

This concept is easy to understand but quite hard to put to practice. But every word on every page of your site must be pushing to a singular goal.

We call it the "rule of one."

It's unlikely that your homepage will get sales. That's not its purpose. Its sole goal is to quickly dazzle a customer and get them to click to another page—hopefully a sales page. A good site quickly parses what the person is looking for and swiftly moves them to the appropriate section of the site.

Once on that second-level page, there must be just one call to action.

Again, every word must be pulling the oar in the direction you want the ship to go. In the writing world, we all must adhere to the painful decree to "murder your darlings."

We must not fall in love with a phrase or concept. No matter how great it is, if it doesn't point to our single call to action, it must be cut.

If our goal is to get a person to schedule an online appointment, there's no need to waste the reader's time with details about where your farm is or how they'll take delivery of the final product. It will confuse them—even if oh so slightly—and fewer folks will fill out that appointment scheduler. Again, decades of testing and research prove it.

Yes, you can cover all the other details, but only after the customer does what you want them to do.

As you lay out a new website or as you review your current site, simply write down the singular goal for each page. If there is any element that cuts away at that goal, move your pinky up to that delete button and murder it.

Your site—and your sales—will be much better for it.

Writing website copy is not all that hard. In fact, it's some of the easiest writing out there. Just follow the rules. Make it all about the customer. Solve their biggest problems. And follow the "rule of one."

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Andy Snyder and his wife, Loni, own Terra Farms, a popular u-pick farm in southern Pennsylvania. Andy is a full-time writer and copy consultant. He can be reached at andysnyder605@gmail.com.



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Bokashi Compost for Cut Flower Health

Funded by the ASCFG Grower Grant Program

Matt Arthur, BLH Farm, Columbia, Missouri

Introduction

We farm on a hilltop in a former hayfield. It's a beautiful setting but the light loess and heavy clay soil was depleted well before we started growing four years ago, so we have, from the beginning, focused on improving the health of our soil within a no-till system. For the past two summers we have integrated bokashi compost into new beds and jumped at the chance to evaluate the impact of this source of organic material on both soil and plant health.

After seeing the transformation of our heavy clay soil over just a single summer we are beyond enthusiastic about bokashi and hope our experience will benefit other farmers. In this article we will present bokashi, explain how it's produced and used on our farm, and discuss what soil tests and our observations tell us about the changes to our farm's soil.

Bokashi—An Overview

Nearly all compost produced in the United States is aerobic and produced by combining a nitrogen source such as food waste with a carbon source such as chipped wood. Microbes feeding on this moistened mix cycle carbon, and in the process bring the working compost pile up to temperatures of 140 to 160F. In the course of successive cycles of watering and turning to evenly mix this pile and incorporate oxygen for the microbes, the raw input materials are gradually transformed into the undifferentiated, crumbly, dark brown or black material we all know and love.

Although aerobic compost is top-dressed as a soil amendment on nearly every small farm in the country, anaerobic compost—bokashi—has re-

ceived much less attention from farmers. Rooted in Asian farming practices, the term “bokashi” refers to the process of fermenting organic matter in airtight containers by adding helper microbes. At our farm we use EM1 as a source for these microbes, a collection of acid-producing lactobacillus, yeast, and other species developed by Dr. Teruo Higa.

The microbes need a carrier to be most effective, and as Midwesterners we are fortunate to have ample affordable organic wheat bran available from a local mill. We expand the EM1 with water and molasses, and mix with the bran in food-grade buckets which are sealed to allow the EM1 to colonize the bran without competition from airborne microbes. With its small particle size, this bran provides excellent jumping-off points for the EM1 into our bokashi substrate.

The process of making and using bokashi is simple: fill the vessel with material while sprinkling bokashi bran between layers, then close the container tightly, and drain the liquid that's produced every few days. Once thoroughly pickled and no longer producing leachate, it gives off the strong, pleasantly yeasty scent of spent brewing grains, and is often covered with a thin layer of fuzzy white fungal mycelium. The entire



A 96 gallon bokashi roller



Drain spigots

process should take between 2 and 3 weeks. Note that the material will be fairly acidic due to the lactobacillus bacteria driving the initial stages of the process, as will the leachate.

While aerobic compost piles need to be a minimum of one cubic yard to have a chance of heating up quickly and evenly, bokashi can be produced in any container. For our household scraps we use a 4-gallon tub, but for the farm we used a number of 96-gallon roller trash bins with spigots fitted into the base, which we can move around easily. Each roller can hold around 350 pounds of material, so every six is a ton of inputs.

Uses for Bokashi

At first, how to use bokashi is a puzzle. Unlike aerobic compost, bokashi still very much resembles its constituent components—fermented carrots are still obviously carrots—and an approach other than spreading along the beds with buckets is in order. We do the following:

- Bury in the root zone 6-10" below soil surface.
- Feed to composting worms for castings.
- Aerobically compost.
- Dilute leachate and use as soil drench.

Burying: The first, burying, is the focus of this article. The fermented material is pre-digested when buried, making it a very accessible food for indigenous soil microbes which then, along with the microbes originating with the EM1, finish the job in the soil. Trenching and placing 6" or so beneath the soil surface means that once digested, the organic material forms a band in the root zone.

Vermicompost: Although we were uncertain whether composting worms—red wigglers at our farm—would eat acidic bokashi, we found that after a short period of adjustment they were happy with this food.

Compost: We find that bokashi used as an input for aerobic compost results in piles that heat up more quickly and break down more evenly, so we also use the bokashi process as a precursor to our aerobic composting.

Leachate: The by-product of fermentation is also a valuable input that we dilute (for acidity) and use a root drench. We typically discard the first 3-4 days' liquid as we think it's immature.

Bokashi in a No-Till Setting

Our goal is to avoid disturbing the soil once our permanent beds are formed, which effectively rules out the subsurface burial for established sections of the field. Luckily, as a new and growing farm we have been adding new blocks each year and thought it would be a great time to add a significant amount of bokashi and evaluate the impact.

Early this spring (2021) we made somewhere between 12 and 14 thousand pounds of bokashi from nitrogen-rich food

waste which required around 500 pounds of bokashi bran, about two food-grade 50-gallon barrels, and half a sling bag of bran. While we chose to use post-consumer food scraps due to their high levels of nitrogen and (hopefully) trace elements, it's also possible to bokashi surplus agricultural materials such as soybean or rice hulls. Typically this is done by tightly covering the material with a non-breathable tarp to allow bokashi at scale.

When this was nearly done fermenting, we dug a series of 3-4' wide trenches roughly two feet deep using a rented excavator, into which we placed a layer of bokashi 12" thick, topping with cardboard as a carbon boost. Upon covering with the removed soil we sowed a cover crop of cereal rye to suppress weeds and keep the soil from eroding.

After 8 weeks to allow the bokashi to fully break down and before the rye set seed, we mowed it and used our BCS rotary plow to form beds. These are the beds we are comparing to adjacent areas that did not receive bokashi.



Before plowing



Newly-formed beds

Results

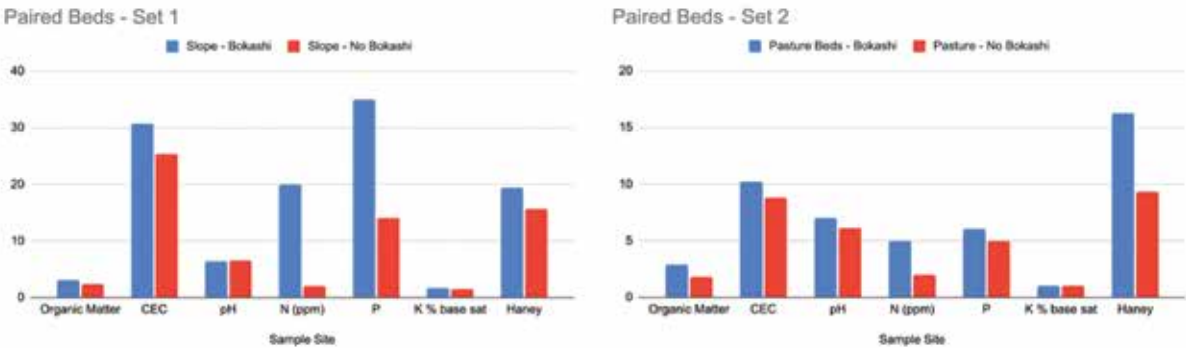
Qualitatively, the change in the soil texture was the most striking outcome of this trial. While we have been successfully improving the soil in other non-bokashi beds by rotating in fast-growing cover crops and managing fertility, the first season (or two) in new beds is usually a struggle—the heavy clay beneath a thin layer of loess is a challenge for tender transplants and makes a slippery sticky mess when it rains.

Once we had the beds full of growing plants and the soil had settled back from the plowing, we tracked the texture of the soil over the season. The difference between bokashi beds and “normal” beds appeared midsummer, and by August it was incredibly vast. The beds with bokashi incorporated had a superb tilth and crumbled easily while retaining its structure. Nonetheless, all our soil is on the clay to clay-loam line, so the changes weren't the result of simply incorporating more silt or sand.

Soil tests provided quantitative data. Soil samples were pulled for 0-6” deep and testing was done by Midwest Labs using the Soil Health Complete test suite, which we like because it includes measuring the amount of CO2 released from the soil sample in a 24-hour period, a good proxy for biological activity in the soil. The lab results also include a “Soil Health Calculation” based on this CO2 burst, together with organic carbon, organic nitrogen, and the C/N ratio which represents the overall health of the system on a 0-25 scale.

For this article we are comparing two sets of beds, and a table of the soil test values follows:

Sample Site	Organic Matter	CEC	pH	N (ppm)	P	K% base	SHC	1 Day CO2	C:N Ratio	S	Boron	Zn	Mn	Mg % base sat
Slope Bokashi	3.2	30.7	6.3	20	35	1.7	19.4	173	11.6	7	0.1	0.9	10	21.6
Slope No Bokashi	2.5	25.4	6.6	2	14	1.5	15.6	136	17	5	0.1	0.7	8	24.2
Pasture Beds Bokashi	2.9	10.3	7	5	6	1	16.3	149	13.8	8	0.4	0.7	8	1
Pasture No Bokashi	1.8	8.8	6.1	2	5	1	9.4	85	16.2	6	0.1	0.6	12	1



Graphs of key values. Note the y-axes cover different ranges.

The first difference is in organic matter. Unsurprisingly, there is more organic matter in the bokashi beds, and a correspondingly higher cation-exchange capacity (CEC). Also unsurprisingly, the nitrogen parts per million and phosphorus were also higher as we added nitrogen-rich food waste.

No clear impact on either pH or percent base saturation of potassium was seen, and surprisingly the trace elements we sampled were just as low in the bokashi beds as the control set. This was a real disappointment because we have been struggling to increase levels of these essential micronutrients and had hoped bokashi would help.

Turning to the two test values that speak directly to soil health—the one-day CO2 burst, and the soil health calculation—we see clearly the impact as both values are significantly higher in the test beds.

Summary

As a flexible, carbon-free method of preparing organic waste materials for incorporation into farm soil we think bokashi should be a part of many more farm systems.



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A Guide to Easy Water Testing

Issues with the quality of your water source can lead to problems down the road. Here's how you can get ahead of them.

Brian D. Sparks

University of Florida Horticulture Professor and Extension Specialist Paul Fisher is focused on grower education across all stages of plant production. In one of his recent “Five Tips for Horticulture” YouTube video series (<https://is.gd/LWrHgQ>), Fisher offers advice on how growers can test the chemical quality of their irrigation water.

Step 1: Sampling

At least once a year, send a water sample to a commercial horticulture lab for a complete analysis of pH, EC, alkalinity, and essential nutrients, as well as ions such as sodium chloride and fluoride. You can collect a sample by flushing water through your irrigation lines for five minutes (so you're not sampling water that's been sitting in the pipes), then collect around two cups of water using a specialized container or an empty drinking water bottle.

Step 2: Testing Frequency

It's important to do regular water testing weekly or monthly.

Step 3: Interpretation

You may want to send in both a water sample and a nutrient solution for analysis at a lab. Once your results come back, use an online tool at cleanwater3.org, which was developed by Fisher, Dr. Rosa Raudales at the University of Connecticut, and Dr. Bruce MacKay from Thomas Baine Ltd. in New Zealand.



See videos like this on the University of Florida's Greenhouse Training Online YouTube page at <https://is.gd/LWrHgQ>.

To use the WaterQual tool, go to the site, select “Tools,” and scroll through the decision support tools related to irrigation and water quality. Choose the WaterQual tool and enter in the results that you get from the laboratory analysis of your irrigation water. Click on “Interpret,” and the tool will provide an analysis of the numbers.

Step 4: Take Action

Solutions will vary depending on what your water analysis tells you. Check out the “Tackling Water Problems” table on this page for the most appropriate advice.

Step 5: Follow up for Advice and Training

Talk with experts, such as university researchers or consultants, to decide on the appropriate long-term remediation. You can also find resources on the Cleanwater3.org website, including information on the University of Florida's range of greenhouse production

Tackling Water Problems

The chart below outlines a number of potential issues that could come up from ions that are dissolved in your irrigation water, and how to manage them.

Issue	Problems	Solutions
Hard water from calcium deposits	Clogged emitters, difficulty in dissolving pesticides	Reverse osmosis/membrane filtration, increasing acidity
High alkalinity	Excess limestone, rising pH	Injection of sulfuric, nitric, or phosphoric acid; reducing limestone in your growing media mix; using a higher ammonium fertilizer
Iron, manganese, and other heavy metal accumulation	Bacteria, rust particles that clog emitters	Oxidation, increased pH
Sodium and chloride	Increased electrical conductivity, making it harder for plants to take up water and nutrient ions	Reverse osmosis, increased leaching of fertilizer solution
Excess nitrogen and phosphorus	Algae and eutrophication (environmental pollution issues)	Increase use of microbials
Excess boron or fluoride	Plant toxicity, even at small levels	Change crop selection to plants less sensitive to high boron levels

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and Vermont



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“Choose Your Zone” Adventure

I communicate with growers nearly every day. Regardless of experience, there is one little detail that many of us seem to not fully understand. Zones. What the heck are zones and why do many of us identify so strongly with them?

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone map was created as a way to help answer the age-old question, “Will this plant survive *winter* in my garden?” It is purely a metric to discuss the cold tolerance of plants, and nothing more. We can forget about the zone concept when discussing summer annuals as we don’t expect them to survive winter in the first place.

Zones tell us nothing about summer highs. Nothing about last or first frost dates. Nothing about precipitation, humidity, soil composition, daylength or any of the dozens of other variables that affect plant growth. They simply indicate the lowest winter temperature usually experienced in a geographic area. Plants are also categorized using these temperature ranges to make plant selection more successful in your individual growing zone.

As an example, let’s look at Zone 7. Rhode Island, North Carolina, Texas, Washington State, and Alaska all have portions that would be considered Zone 7. The frost dates, summer heat, precipitation, and daylengths vary greatly in these

Zone maps tell nothing about precipitation, humidity, soil composition, daylength or any of the dozens of other variables that affect plant growth.

locations, but the one thing they have in common is that they generally drop to the defined range of 0-10F at least once in winter time. This is truly where the similarity ends.

The zone concept is very useful at pre-selecting plants that have a good chance of winter survival in your area. Cold temperatures and freezing kill plants more readily than summer conditions, so the first thing to consider in plant selection is winter survival. Of course heat and many other factors will determine a plant’s ultimate success, but we haven’t come up with a tidy system to classify summer conditions. Some have tried, but these concepts have never caught on.

Two other factors make the zone system less useful than you may have previously thought. Things are changing. Many of us are seeing warmer and warmer winters. Of course we are also seeing an increase in drought, heat waves, extreme rains, fires, etc., but let’s stay on topic. We are discussing only winter lows, and they are going up in many places. The USDA zone map is updated every 10 years, and was last updated in 2012. Things have changed dramatically in the last decade. Even in the past 7 years on our farm in Vermont we have seen a noticeable change. Negative thirty five was common in our first four winters, planting us firmly in our traditional Zone 3. But lately we’re just not getting as cold. Ten below (F) was our lowest temperature last winter, meaning Zone 6 plants would probably have survived just fine. You can’t bank on that, but these warming trends may open up new opportunities for you to try things you assumed would never live.

The other secret is that plant producers don’t always know the true hardiness of what they’re selling. It takes years of trials in dozens of locations to learn how far you can push the boundaries of each and every variety, and often enough the zone assigned to a plant is simply a good guess based on what has traditionally been grown in an area. Don’t let that plant tag stop you from giving something new a try.

Keeping your own records is invaluable. Consider keeping a journal, not only of your observed weather in your specific location, but also what plants may have survived even when they weren’t expected to do so. You may discover that you have been limiting yourself unnecessarily, and in fact you may have changed zones without even leaving home.



MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia



Michelle Elston

Roots Cut Flower Farm
michelle@rootsflowerfarm.com

Newsy Update

Thanks to each of you who responded to my email regarding favorite new crops and farm tours. I thought a quick summary would be fun.

Great Crops

Talinum! We had three people report how happy they were with this easy crop. If you haven't tried 'Jewels of Opar', I'd definitely suggest a try. We planted four years ago and have had ample self-seeding volunteers since, a low-budget investment! The seed easily germinates, and the little round seed pods are a perfect accent to design work.

Lilies. Several growers reported benefitting from having a reliable, long-lasting, focal flower with predictable bloom time by growing lilies in crates. Roselilies were especially popular. I find that customers either love or hate lilies—hopefully your customers are in the “love” category, because they are a great, easy crop to grow.

Marigold. Again, several people appreciated the ease and reliability of marigolds. I second that! While we've trialed many kinds, I personally prefer 'Optiva Orange' and 'Oriental Deep Gold' for long stems and productivity. 'Chedi' is another great series, and some growers loved the 'Tangerine Gems' too.

A few other crops people liked: sweet Annie (*Artemisia annua*), Sunfinity sunflowers, 'Uproar Rose' zinnia, campanula 'Flore Pleno', and delphinium 'Belladonna'. I love the diversity of this list. Here are a few I might add: *Lysimachia clethroides* (with weed barrier pathways to keep it contained), *Celosia cristata* 'Zara', and lisianthus 'Rosita' and 'Advantage' for bouquet work.

Farm Tours

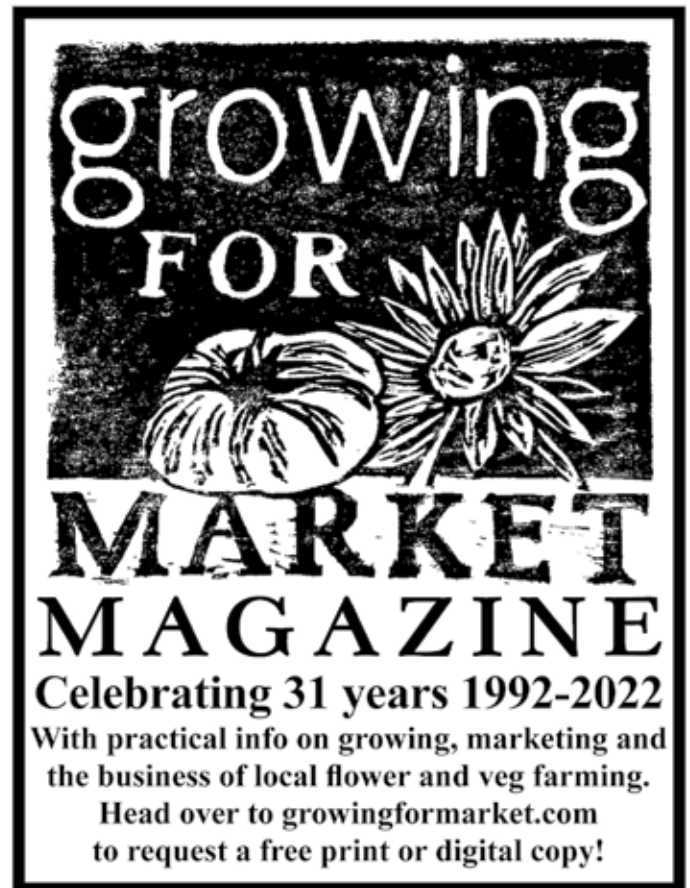
I received wonderful messages from many of you about the ASCFG farm tours you attended in 2021. You all are ready to reconnect! I'm happy to report that as a board, we hear

you, and are working on multiple ways each of you can do that at your own comfort level. We are hoping to offer both in-person and virtual meetups and educational opportunities this coming year. Here are two excerpts from emails you sent that I found particularly great:

"I always come away from them with a sense of camaraderie with other growers. The ability to learn from others' success and failures without needing to make them all on my own is valuable. And I always find little nuggets of how the grower is doing something in their business that *shifts how I think* about troubleshooting in my own business." Marci Fellenbaum, Riverside Blooms, Washington Boro, Pennsylvania.

"One of the things I loved about visiting Roots was that many aspects of the farm felt like the complete opposite of my farm, but we *share many similar goals and have found very different ways to get there*. It was a reminder that there is room for SO MANY different models of flower farming." Maya Kosok, Hillen Homestead, Baltimore, Maryland.

Both of these responses convey the beauty of seeing other farming models, implementing what may work on your farm and your business, and the amplification of learning that results. To me, that is the essence of our beloved ASCFG. Cheers to 2022!



SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee



Linda Doan

Aunt Willie's Wild Flowers
auntwillies@gmail.com

Add a Farm Tour to your 2022 Season

I'm happy to be standing in for Val Schirmer as Southeast Regional Director for the last year of her three-year term as Val has moved up the ladder to be our ASCFG President. Yeah, Val! I also enjoyed meeting some of you last year as we hosted one of the ASCFG Farm Tours. Such fun to have 30 flower farmers visit and talk flowers all the while. And this led me to my first topic for the *Quarterly*—Farm Tours, not for ASCFGers only, but for the general public.

How often do you hear the request, "Can I come visit your farm?" My answer is always the same, "We'd love to have you join us for a farm tour—we host a tour every month and would be so happy to see you there!"

I encourage each of you to think about hosting a tour this season. Many folks think we stroll through perfectly blooming flower beds just hoping for company. Since we all

know that's not even remotely true but since we do want folk to see what flower farming actually involves, we offer farm tours. Tours enable us to have people visit the farm at our convenience, share our own personal history in farming, educate about the process of growing, share what's available at our farm, cut a bouquet to take home, and **make money with relatively little effort**. Our farm is an old family farm that has been in Roy's family since the 1700s so we have lovely old outbuildings and falling-down barns, but what people are most interested in is what we all have—flowers and farmers!



Farm tour gathering



Anna Hedges Photography

Everyone loves Roy

What is involved in a farm tour?

Introduction and History This is the only time we stand right in front of the group and talk in a classroom-like setting. We introduce each guest quickly so all can see who's here and from where. Visitors will chat with each other a bit more because of these introductions. This can be a little about how you got started and how it's progressed, what you grow, what other services you offer, who's involved, hopes and dreams, family farm or first-generation farmers etc. Folks are interested in the farm but also in the farmers so they love to hear personal stories and this is where we share those. Because we have an old family farm, Roy tells Civil War stories and talks about farmers' markets a century ago. Everyone has something interesting to tell about their farm. What makes you unique? That's what they want to hear. They may have a few questions here, but most questions are best answered in the field.

Tour the Beds Here's where people learn about flower farming. Our farm has three main sections: the dahlia beds, the hoophouse, and the perennial/woody beds. People enjoy seeing what and how you grow. In the spring, you might be educating about planting ranunculus and anemone corms; how to store peonies or pull tulips; and when to cut lilacs. In the summer, in addition to the regulars you might introduce them to unique bloomers like lisianthus and celosia. Fall and dahlias and fall foliage go hand in hand but it's also a great time to talk about the importance of succession planting. Give good instructions about where to walk and not walk and what they can and can't touch or cut. I'm an old PE teacher so I'm good at saying "First 15 people move into the first row of dahlias, next 15 into the third row, and I'll stand in between." Think this through ahead of time or you'll waste time regrouping and appear unorganized.



Anna Hedges Photography

Talking peonies

Cutting Flowers A ball jar bouquet can be the added value of your tour. We give everyone a jar with just a few flowers (so it looks pretty when they arrive) and tell them they'll cut some along the way. Let them cut ONLY things you have in overabundance, that you don't need that week, or that might be about to go—for us that might be bridal veil spirea, mock orange, 'Limelight' hydrangea, dahlias, and some really pret-

ty weeds! We don't grow that many flowers but there's always something. I'm honest here—I might let them cut the red ranunculus because they're a little past their prime or not my favorite color, but they're still happy to get them. Give a bit of cutting instruction which is easier if they're only cutting a few varieties.

Summarize at the End

Ask questions like "What did you learn?" or "What do you want to grow now that you've visited?", etc. This reminds them that this has been a learning

experience and keeps them thinking about your farm. Always invite them to another tour which will be different because different flowers will be blooming, and let them know about other events and opportunities coming up at your farm.



Ball jar bouquets

Time of Tour What does your space allow? We try to limit our tours to two hours. We have to talk fast and keep them moving but any longer and we're afraid they'll start to get antsy; any shorter and they might not think they're getting their money's worth. If your beds are all together in one space you'll have time to go into good detail here. We're spread out and have to drive between spaces so we gotta hustle. Our tours are generally during the week and begin at 6:30 p.m. so people can come after work when it's cooler. Saturday tours are 10 a.m. as it's hot in the South.

How Often and How Many People? What number are you comfortable speaking to? We have loud voices and love crowds but if there are too many, someone's bound to get "lost" along the way. We limit our tours to 30 people; with COVID that dropped to 15, then up to 25. Our fields are open and we try to encourage social distancing. We are able to fill most tours quickly and we host a tour every month April through October. If you're not comfortable in this setting, perhaps you can train one of your workers to lead the tour. That's good for them and for you. We often get requests for small group tours. We used to try to accommodate these and discovered it was better to allow them help choose the date, but open the tour up to others. Small groups rarely come through as promised, in our experience. We try to choose different evenings of the week and occasionally host on a Saturday.

How to Publicize? Social media, blog post to email group, and website. If you do a farmers' market you can hand out a flyer about the tour. Include the date and some details on



Good photo for IG and FB

social media (date, time, etc.) and send them to your website where they'll get all the details like cost, rain or shine, no cancellations, bring nippers, dress for a farm, what they get. Be sure the website link has an easy way for them to make payment. I'm so thankful I no longer have to say, "Send me your check!" We don't usually post our tours until about a week away, which allows us to look at weather, flowers available etc. We are able to fill our tours since we have built up our tour community, but I would recommend giving them more lead time to sign up. It might be good to schedule tours regularly, say every first Tuesday of the month. Just realize if weather doesn't cooperate you need a rain plan.



Attendees brave our rainy ASCFG 2021 tour

Rain Plan I highly recommend you schedule your tours "rain or shine" if at all possible. We have several buildings we can duck into if there's a sudden downpour, but if it's a nice steady rain, umbrellas will do the trick so have some extras handy. If you've posted that the tour is rain or shine and they've paid their money, there's no need to refund because they choose not to come. Tours are to be simple with little labor involved, and refunding money and answering questions about rescheduling is complicating.

Cost, Labor, and Profit We charge \$30 per attendee, so for a 30-person tour we make \$900. The only cost we have is the \$30 it costs for 30 ball jars, and I often use gifted jars with pretty fruit labels. We spend about an hour putting a few flowers in jars and I have a volunteer who loves to help. We put a sign at the end of the road and a balloon on the mailbox and we're ready to go. Not as profitable as a wedding for sure but not even in the ballpark on labor comparisons.

Photographs I recommend hiring a professional photographer to photograph your tour. I always think I'll take pictures, but I'm too busy talking and keeping things moving to take good ones. Often you can trade photography for free flowers in some form or other, but even if you have to pay cash, a professional is worth the investment. I usually ask

that they get pictures of the farm, Roy and me, and images of our guests cutting, interacting, having fun. It makes publicizing your next event so much easier. We often have photographers who just join our tour and take photos that they're happy to share (you'll be amazed what they find interesting). I then do an Instagram post or story with just their pictures and give them credit if they send me their whole file. Be sure to always tag photographers in all your postings. That is just being professional.

Practical Considerations

1. Registration area for check-in.
2. Name tags they filled out by attendees.
3. Adequate parking and someone to help park and unpark. If you don't have adequate parking can you shuttle?
4. Porta-potty or bathroom available.
5. Liability insurance for visitors on your farm; does your insurance cover events like this?
6. Rain plan. We were stuck in the chicken coop for about 25 minutes where we played "name that flower" and laughed lots.
7. Signage to get them there and a balloon on the mailbox.
8. Nippers for those who didn't bring them.
9. Tell them to dress for a "run-down old farm" - wear sturdy shoes, etc.
10. Safety. If there are areas you don't want visitors, rope them off or give very clear instructions. If you have electric fences, turn them off if possible or if not, tie a ribbon and warn verbally. Point out poison ivy, holes in the ground, slippery slopes, etc. We also include these hazards in our publicity so they understand they're coming to a farm with some risks involved. I recommend you sit down, think of what could go wrong, and have a plan to prevent or handle.

Southeast Member Input I asked if any of our members were hosting tours and received several responses. While few had hosted a stand-alone farm tour, several had hosted similar events or expressed interest in learning more.



Visitors at Bloom WNC

Abigail Moffitt of Bloom WNC has attended several tours and workshops at our farm and successfully holds events on her farm and writes: This year I continued my monthly farm tours. They were popular and I generally sold out (just 20 people a tour). I charge \$30 but half of this is donated to a non-profit organization. I do limit cuts on my lisianthus because they are tricky to know when to cut. I generally pick a big vase of them and let attendees pick out two or three stems in the beginning. I show them how to pick stems properly.



Sip 'n Snip at Rebel Run
Fresh Flowers and Herbs

Sandy Alcorn with Rebel Run Fresh Flowers and Herbs does something similar to a tour she calls Sip 'n Snip. She writes: Guests were able to purchase tickets to come out to my backyard flower farm to enjoy coffee by the fire, donuts, and other small refreshments. After

enjoying coffee together, everyone was able to walk through the flowers and cut their own selection to be arranged in a vase. I was available to help with arranging but most people didn't even need it. We really had a great time and I can't wait to do it again! Twenty people attended at \$30/person.

Connie Barron of Connie's Garden responded: I organized a U Pick tour in July. I sent out emails with a day and time; asked them to bring snips if they had any, as well as the usual—sunscreen, sun hat, gloves, and a container to take their bounty home in. I provided water, buckets filled with conditioned water, and a list which showed them what was

growing in each of my beds. I then took them on a tour and explained each flower, spoke about safety while walking and looking, and explained how to cut the flowers. I cut the dahlias and hydrangea for them, but everything else was a “do it yourself” situation. My neighbor had butterflies to release that weekend so I said, “Let the boys do it on my U Pick Day.”



Connie's Garden U-Pick

It was a great day! I'm small, but I'll do it again next year. I charged \$15 but will charge \$20 next year.

Anne Phythyon of Franklin Flower Farm attended our ASCFG tour and workshop. She hasn't hosted a tour but says: I have attended Nikki Irving's workshops at Flourish Flower Farm in Asheville. They are just wonderful and they are my go-to model for hosting a tour and Nikki makes her guests feel welcome. She offers a morning and afternoon workshop on the same day and finishes with either a brunch (morning session) or light hors d'oeuvres (afternoon session). The best farms take care to really host their guests. I came home from both her workshops and the wonderful one you and your husband hosted over the summer determined to work harder and lay out a beautiful farm to bring people to it.

Give a farm tour a try. Even if you only have a few attend the first time you offer, after the tour you'll have a sense of the workability of tours for your farm. Allowing folk to visit, see your flower production, and form a relationship with you and your flowers is always a good thing in my book. We genuinely enjoy our farm tour visitors and have formed several long-standing friendships...and that's such a good thing! Happy Flowering!

NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming



Susan Rockwood

Arcola Trail Flower Farm

Susan@ArcolaTrailFlowers.com

Flower farming and farming in general are about learning, experimenting, and improving from year to year. Mistakes and failures are a valuable part of the process. Some crops take years to get right for your climate, growing setup, and timing, but are well worth the effort. For me, it has taken a few years to be successful growing the universally popular ranunculus and anemone.

New growers often ask, “What have you learned that you would do differently in retrospect, and what advice would you give?” Answer: I wish I had not waited so long to attempt to grow ranunculus and anemones. When I started flower farming eight years ago, I didn't have the confidence to try growing them because everything I heard or read de-



Trays of pre-sprouted ranunculus corms



Pre-sprouted ranunculus corm ready to plant



Planting a small bed of ranunculus



Growing anemones in crates

scribed them as tricky crops best suited for advanced growers. I drooled over farmer posts of gorgeous bunches of anemone and ranunculus and got tired of telling customers that I didn't grow them. So finally, three years ago I tiptoed into the world of corms. There are so many great resources now to walk you step by step through the growing process from soaking and pre-sprouting to planting in crates or in the ground and in tunnels depending on your situation. While I am still working on the best timing and the challenges of growing them outside in Minnesota, I learn more and have more success with these crops each year.

My advice is to start small until you get the process worked out, so order 20-40 corms so you can practice and experiment without investing too much money. The easy part of the process is soaking and pre-sprouting the corms. The more challenging aspect that may take a few years to get right

is timing and finding the right environment with the ability to control the fluctuating temperatures during the spring months. While both crops like cool temperatures and tolerate 20s and 30s, the ideal range is about 40 to 50 degrees. Above 70 degrees will shut them down. For flexibility, I grew them in bulb crates the first two years so I could move them in and out of the garage as needed if the temps dropped below freezing (I don't have a greenhouse). I am no longer willing to move 25 bulb crates for three months! Last year was my first attempt at growing ranunculus in the field and it was so much easier on my back. This year I will build a low tunnel and try to plant outside earlier.

Have you met anyone who does not love anemone and ranunculus? You don't have to be an expert to grow them, but your customers will think you are an expert if you do, and you will sell every stem. Good luck!



Crates of newly planted ranunculus



SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana,
New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah



Shanti Rade

Whipstone Farm

info@whipstone.com

I am looking forward to a less stressful and better staffed 2022. How about you? We are doing lots of soul searching, crop planning, and tweaking of our farm systems over the winter. There is always a lot of work involved in planning a successful season ahead: new techniques to tackle, tools to master, challenges to overcome, and so many adjustments that are needed to keep the farm relevant and in the growth mindset. But as we mature in our business there are some things that just work for us. So I thought I would share just a small snippet of something that works.

Winter Sowing

Every climate is different. I feel like we are especially unique (challenged?) climate wise in the high desert, but I am guessing everyone feels that way at times. We have both intense heat and cold to contend with, along with very prolonged dry spells. But one way in which our dry climate works in our favor is winter sowing. I know farmers in other regions who prep beds in the fall and then tarp them to keep the winter moisture out as the only method for getting in the field to plant in the very early spring. We don't have that issue. Even though we can get into the single digits in winter, except for a very rare occasion our ground doesn't freeze solid and is usually on the dry side, meaning we can still prepare beds in winter on any warm, sunny day. I have a handful of flowers I have found always do better direct seeded for me and have a fairly wide window of when they can be sown. These for me are the winter gems. Though none of them will bloom until spring, I love them for the versatility they offer in planting time. There is something about planting and getting my hands in the soil in the middle of winter that brings me a lot of joy

Much information can be found in Lisa Mason Ziegler's book *Cool Flowers* on planting cold hardy annuals in fall and spring; here I am just expanding on that concept. I try to do transplanting of cold hardy varieties in late October early November before it gets too bitter cold here and the plants have the chance to establish themselves. But I find there is a

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lot more leeway when it comes to direct-seeding cold-hardy varieties. If it's too cold, the seeds or newly emerging seedlings will just sit there for a bit, but will eventually grow when conditions are right and still be far ahead of the same crop planted in the typical spring window. I am going to focus on just one of them for this article, but I will include a small list below of the other species that work similarly for me.

***Papaver somniferum*. Breadseed poppies, or opium poppies, if you prefer.**



My first few attempts at growing these poppies failed because I tried starting them in trays in the greenhouse. They like to germinate cold and they don't love to be transplanted. Hence, direct seeding in fall, winter or spring is a great method. Seed is also fairly cheap and it can be easily saved from the pods to keep your own seed stock going, or allowed to self sow. While the seed is quite small, the plants don't seem to mind growing rather crowded, so I seed on the thick side, and I don't thin the plants.

Planting

My ideal planting times would be once in early November and once again in February. We warm up fast in the spring so I want my last planting to germinate and start growing before the weather warms (in your climate, as always, that may be different.) I have also found I can seed any time from October to the beginning of March with success in Zone 7a. So if your climate is not quite as warm or dry as mine, hopefully you can do it sometime in the appropriate window.

Since poppies do well if you don't cover the seeds, I like to make three very shallow furrows down the bed, seed thickly into the furrows (approximately 24 seeds per foot) and leave the seeds uncovered. This provides the seeds light which they prefer to germinate, but being in the furrow keeps the seeds from blowing away. Watering them in (with drip tape) also helps nestle the seeds into the soil.

Growing On

I cover the bed with row cover/Remay if they will be in the ground over winter. They may germinate quite slowly, and grow even slower, but trust me, that's okay. I think of this crop's timing a bit like garlic, so if you have any experience with growing garlic you can follow that time frame. One pass of weeding is usually enough, once the plants are about two inches high and have formed nice thick lines down the bed. For the most part I leave them completely untended for the winter, just watering very occasionally if we have had no rain or snow, and making sure the gophers don't get too happy.

Harvesting

Poppies usually bloom for me in May and the pods can be harvested from June into July. I plant a few different varieties because I love all the colors and forms, and the bees go absolutely nuts for the flowers. We do not, however, use the flowers as cuts, we wait for the seed pods to form. I mainly enjoy taking endless videos of the bees on the flowers. I know some folks use these poppies as cut flowers, generally for events only as they have a pretty short vase life. If you want to try that I would cut at the bud crack stage (where you can barely see the color through only a crack in the pod), then sear the ends with a torch or a flame to seal the milky sap off before putting the stems into water. We sell the seed pods green (fresh) and we also leave them on the plants until they are brown and dry and harvest them *en masse* for dried sales, our own dried floral work and wreaths. Since we can use them green or dried the harvest window is fairly forgiving. When we harvest the pods brown and dry they are so



fully mature and stiff there is no need to hang them afterwards. I bunch them and let them sit upright in crates, just in case there is still a little moisture in them, before I pack them away. Seeds will start to fall out of the poppy pods, so if you plan to collect seed, keep this in mind, and put them in a container that can catch the seeds. Our florists, wholesalers, and retail customers absolutely love poppy pods, both fresh and dried—I feel there is a pretty inexhaustible market for them in our area.



Varieties, Seed Sources, and Saving Your Own

We grow mainly the breadseed poppies (*Papaver somniferum*) for the giant and medium-sized pods, along with some of the Shirley poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) for the daintier flowers and adorable seed pods that work great in mini wreaths. Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds and Uprising Organic Seeds both have a great selection of both varieties, and Geo Seeds has some of the rhoeas as well. My favorite varieties of the breadseed poppies are ‘Giant Rattlebox’, ‘Frosted Salmon’, and ‘Purple Peony’, along with ‘Amazing Grey’ and ‘Pandora’ in the Shirley poppies.

While I am sure the many varieties I grow can and do cross, since the bees are all over them, I have successfully saved seed from all of them. I have been able to keep the various sized pods consistent, so if I save seeds from the giant-podded varieties, I will get giant-sized pods again from that saved seed. And since the Shirley poppies are a different species, they shouldn’t cross with the breadseed types anyway. Since I am growing them for the pods and the seed is for my own use, I am not concerned with them crossing and the flower colors intermixing. I like the abundance of seed I have from saving my own, which allows me plenty of seed to sow as thickly as I like, and maybe I am a little too heavy handed when it comes to seeding. The seeds are super easy to separate while keeping the pods intact. Some varieties have small vents at the top of the pod, so you can shake out the seed and still use or sell the seed pods. Others, like some of the giant seed pods, you have to crack open. I just choose a select number to sacrifice for seed—sometimes I can cut a hole on the bottom and still use the pod glued onto a wreath while hiding the opening.

There is a very interesting video on the history of the breadseed poppy on the Baker Creek website called “*Dangerous Beauty - a history of the opium poppy*” if you are a plant geek or just wondering about the legality of growing opium poppies.

For Further Consideration

As I mentioned, I use similar methods and timing for planting many other cold-hardy annuals. If the seed is larger, I tend to run down the furrow with the handle side of a rake after I sow, to just barely cover the seeds but leave the furrow intact. For the smallest seeds, I leave them completely uncovered. My most tried and true varieties for winter sowing are larkspur, nigella, bells of Ireland, bupleurum, safflower, cress, monarda, godetia, calendula, bachelor buttons, flax, agrostemma, orlaya, and wheat.

I hope you try some winter sowing if your climate allows. Get out and get some of Vitamin D this winter!

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington



Erin McMullen

Rain Drop Farm
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Happy New Year! Hard to believe that it's time to kick off a new season, but here we are. As I write this the weather has turned, the days are shortened and I am in serious hibernation mode. But there are still dahlias to divide, bulbs to plant, fields to clean, and countless other chores to get done before the rush of spring.



Taking stock of our tubers this last fall gave me pause and made me think that a little refresher/insight into our processes with dahlias might be a great way to start the new year. Our dahlia sales have become our single biggest crop for revenue. Over the course of the last 4 or 5 years we've expanded our collection to include just a bit over 100 varieties, and over 20,000 plants on about 2 acres for the 2021 season. We grow our dahlias a bit differently than is traditionally thought of as the "right" way to grow, but it's the right way for us! During those years we've also done extensive trialing of different varieties to ensure that we are growing the best, longest-lasting, most desirable blooms for our customers.

When looking at such a diverse crop, as far as variety goes, it's really important to identify your market and thus what the best options are for your farm. I'm including some variety names below as options if you're looking for solid, readily available ones to add to your lineup.

If you sell exclusively at farmers' markets, or other consumer-driven markets (like grocery), bright, long-lasting blooms are going to be a great fit. Balls, poms, and some formals are top of our list for markets and grocery—bright colors and plenty of variety is the name of the game in our markets. Some that we really like are 'Cornel Bronze', 'Ivanetti', 'Audrey Grace', 'Pink Sylvia', 'Hillcrest Suffusion', 'Maarn', 'Red Fox', 'Purple Fox', and 'Sweet Love'. All these dahlias have high productivity, long stems, and great vase life.

Are you aiming at the wedding/event designer? Maybe a more subtle approach in colors is appropriate (although we have seen an increase in demand for colors here, yay!). Blush, white, cream, pink, burgundy, you know the deal—these are always in demand for the event crowd. We love ball and pom dahlias for their longevity, but in event application there's more demand for softer shapes and petals, and longevity isn't always as important. Hence the constant demand for 'Café au Lait' and her diva sisters in the dinner-plate category. Some other great options in this color realm are 'Sweet Natalie', 'Silver Years', 'Wizard of Oz', 'Ryecroft Jan', 'L'Ancrese', 'Small World', 'Jowey Mirella', 'Karma Chocolate', and 'Sierra Glow'.

The largest portion of our dahlia sales comes through our florist sales, which may be for events, but are also dailies and brick and mortar shops. Again, we lean heavily on the ball and formal varieties, as they consistently give us the highest-quality, longest-lasting blooms that keep our customers coming back week after week. Some of our favs are 'Jowey Winnie', 'Peaches n Cream' (or just Peaches if you will), 'American Dawn', 'Daisy Duke', 'Doris Duke', and 'Linda's Baby'.

So, you're all set with what you are going to grow for your market. Now you'll need to decide how you'll plant them. If you've grown dahlias before you're aware that the tubers aren't hardy in all climates, and generally speaking, will need to be dug and stored to ensure that they survive the winter. If you are in a climate that allows for it, you can try overwintering. We dig and divide dahlias every year. In our climate (zone 8b), we are able to overwinter most years with no problems. However, there are always those years that are out of the norm and we've learned that lesson the hard way. In the 20+ years we've been growing dahlias we've lost substantial amounts of tubers twice, like more than 50%, so now we hedge our bets by digging and storing at least a good portion every year. Be aware that even in climates that allow for

successful overwintering other factors may hinder your success. Dahlia tubers will rot in excessively wet soils, so make sure that your dahlia beds are well drained when prepping them in the spring. Another issue that we encounter in our overwintered tubers is rodent damage. Turns out that the cozy spaces that we create for our tubers to overwinter also lend themselves to lovely homes for rodents, who won't say no to a free tuber snack in the deep dark winter.

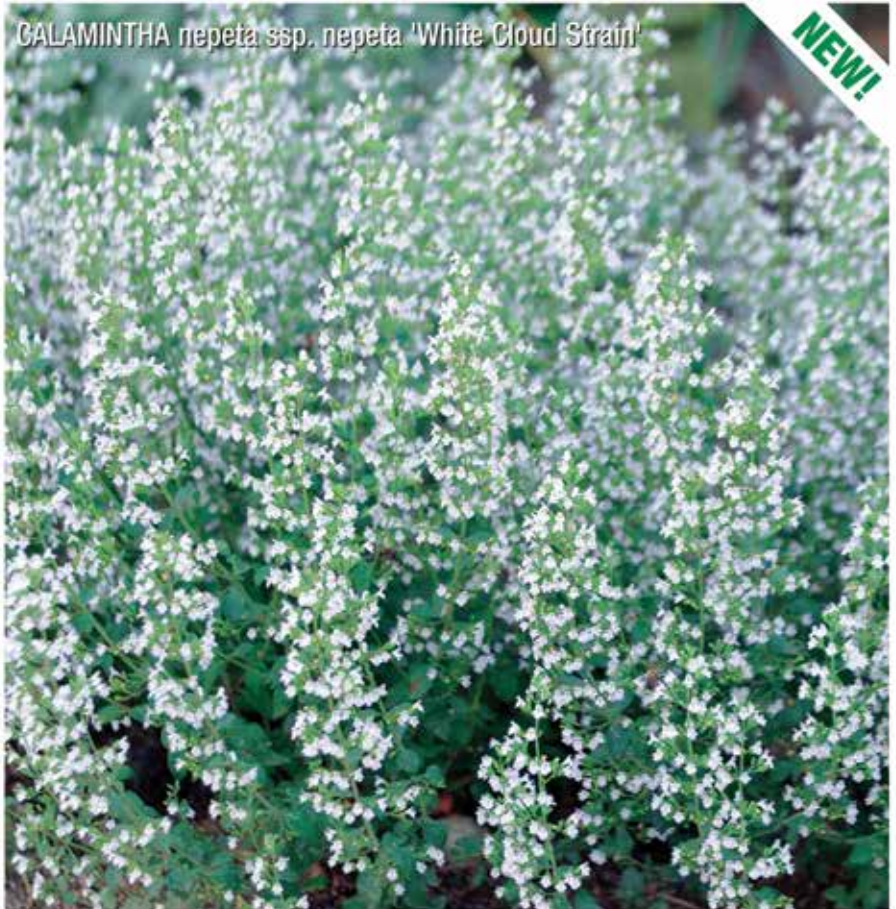
In our mild climate we start planting in the field in March, and usually have field blooms by the middle of June, making our season about 4 months long. We also grow a select variety in high tunnels to give us even earlier blooms, by the first of June to hit that first wedding and event window of the summer. I would encourage you to watch that last freeze date in your region and experiment with planting some tubers early to see if you can push the window of harvest too.

If you've ever bought tubers you'll know that many come as single tubers, and some places (mostly importers) sell clumps. We almost exclusively grow clumps in our fields. Over many years of trial and error clumps have proven to give us earlier blooms, higher yields, and more plant stability, meaning that we don't stake our field-grown dahlias (we also don't experience very much wind in our location). Our dahlias are planted 2 across a 2' bed, about 16-18" on center, with a line of drip down the center. We plant with an all-purpose organic fertilizer (after studying our soil tests and amending for pH as needed), use a single line of 8" spaced drip tape on each bed, and lay 2-foot paths with weed barrier. And then we just start raking in the money.

Just kidding. We do a foliar feed on our dahlias every 3-4 weeks during the growing season, and cut them 4-5 days a week in the height of the season.

All in all, dahlias are a pretty forgiving crop. Give them plenty of sun, water, and attentive fertilization and they will thrive. For us, here in the PNW, our single biggest struggle is with insects, the top two being thrips and cucumber or coreop-

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sis beetles. Some great information on thrips is buried deep in the old Bulletin Board in the Members Only section of the ASCFG website (which is freshly renewed and super great, check it out if you haven't already!). We use a combination of strategically-timed applications of spinosad and beneficial insects (our top being *Orius*, minute pirate bugs). So much of the information that we've used to hone our dahlia growing was mined from past ASCFG conferences, other growers, and the Bulletin Board—I recommend spending some time this winter scouring those resources!

That brings us to harvest and sales. There are lots of different opinions when it comes to the best way to get the best blooms out of your dahlias. Many people pinch their plants to encourage multiple stems. Since we plant clumps, we are already getting multiple stems per plant, so we don't spend the time to pinch. Instead, we cut the first blooms deep to encourage good side growth, without sacrificing that first flower. Now, this works for us because our season is long enough to ensure plenty of time for the plant to recover and come back even stronger. If you have a short season, or other factors (like extreme heat), you'll want to experiment with different pinching options to see what works best for you.

Once we start harvesting in earnest, we cut dahlias pretty much every day of the week. Our markets use dahlias in bunch sizes of 5-stem and 10-stem, although we prefer 10-stem bunches. While a nice long stem is important, don't discount interest in shorter stems if you have a market for them.

The single most important aspect of dahlia harvest is ensuring the proper stage of bloom at harvest. Each dahlia is slightly different, but on a 1-5 stage scale, with 1 being bud-ded showing color, and 5 being fully open, we aim to harvest at stage 2-3 for all of our dahlias. The past two years we've been a part of a controlled dahlia trial through one of our markets, and there have been extensive data compiled about the majority of the dahlias that our growers produce, including best stage of harvest, vase life, and overall suitability for cuts. All the varieties I've listed above scored high in the rankings and are considered to be premium options for cut flower growers.

There is so much discussion about price points for dahlias so I'm just going to put it out there here—it is not a one price fits all crop. Here in the PNW dahlias grow really well, there are a LOT of dahlia growers and the price points reflect that. In the Midwest or South, that may not be the case and the price commanded will be higher (I hope!). I hear of people selling dahlias for \$3-6/stem and that is awesome! Here, the average price is closer to \$1-3/stem. It's also worth keeping in mind that larger sales command a slightly lower price. So our price to florists and designers is slightly higher than when we sell through grocery, where we may be moving 500-1000 bunches a week.

Finding the sweet spot for pricing will take a bit of work on your part. Keep good records on input, tubers, fertilizer, and LABOR, in order to see a baseline cost for you, then compare to the going rates in your area by connecting with other growers, obtaining the price list of your closest wholesalers, and utilizing the price lists in the Members Only section of the ASCFG website. Once you have established pricing, consider contributing input to that price list, which is purely shaped by the self-reporting of our members. The more we all contribute, the more relevant a resource it becomes.

That's all for the time being. If you have questions about how we grow dahlias, feel free to reach out while the winter season has me inside near the computer. Once spring hits, I'll be out there digging holes and planting. Can't wait! Here's to a healthy, happy, and beautiful 2022 season!

CANADA

Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba,
New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador,
Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island,
Quebec, and Saskatchewan



Janis Harris

Harris Flower Farm
janisandmarkharris@hotmail.com

If You Plant It, They Will Come

I have always dreamed of a field of sunflowers in bloom, like the countryside of Tuscany. The plan before COVID was to have a catered dinner amongst the sunflowers. Total dream setting and dream event. Well, you know, Covid.

As the perpetual optimist that I am, I still planted the about one-acre field to sunflowers in mid-June like we had planned, so we would have optimum blooms on our dinner night, which was scheduled for mid-August. We purchased birdseed and oil seed sunflowers from the local co-op. The two ten-pound bags were less than \$25. We chose to mix the types of sunflowers to stretch out the bloom time. The hope was that one variety would bloom sooner than the other so the bloom span time would be longer. This is the same idea as succession planting—blooms for a longer time. We used a 4-row corn planter and planted the seeds as thick as they would come out. This hardly used one of the ten-pound bags.



Once the sunflowers germinated and were up a few inches we cultivated the field. That was the only weed management we did on them.

When the sunflowers were about five feet tall my dad went through with a bush lawnmower and created the maze. Originally, we were going to cut a straight path and set up for the dinner in the field but when we knew the dinner wouldn't be happening, we decided to change and do a maze.

I kept our social media following informed about the stages of the field. They were just as excited as I was to see buds then the first bloom!



The maze became an income generator for us. We sold tickets for time slots. Guests could come and experience the maze. This was the summer of 2020 so we were still dealing with the early stages of COVID. We conservatively determined how many people we wanted in the maze at a time. It was outdoors but we still wanted to be responsible.

We had 25 tickets per 45-minute slot. The ticket cost was \$10 for 5 and older, children under 5 were free and didn't need a reserved ticket. We hosted 3-4 time slots per day with the best, dreamiest times being during "Golden Hour". The tickets sold out. We could have had more time slots and more people per session, but we wanted to be safe. People showed up at their time. They could explore and complete the maze as many times as they wanted in their 45 minutes. The maze took about 8 minutes to complete (if you didn't make any wrong turns). I parked our van near the field and told them I would honk once to say they had 5 more minutes, then honk twice when the time was up. I encouraged them to take and post lots of pictures of the maze. It was a great experience.

During the time slots we were sure to have our flower cart stocked with bunches of sunflowers they could purchase to take home with them.

We also arranged times with a few of our favourite local photographers. They hosted family photo sessions in the fields. They paid a fee for the use of the field. They could book sessions as often as they wanted during their time. This was another way to generate an income from the field.

We were already insured for having people come to the farm so there were no changes to our insurance costs but it is definitely something you want to have to protect yourself.

We are planning another sunflower field experience for 2022, this time larger and to possibly include a flower festival with other local vendors. We will also plan the dinner that I always dreamed of.

A few important points to keep in mind:

Our sunflower maze field was set back, and not visible from, the road. This was helpful in controlling when people came on to the farm. We didn't want unexpected guests. It is still our home property.

Plan to chop the field before the sunflower heads mature and the seeds ripen. We had a bit of a volunteer sunflower weed problem this year. But the wild turkeys ate very well in the winter.

Find a local drone operator to take overhead and promo videos and photos for you. The photos are pretty breathtaking. You can do a bird's eye tour of our farm by searching Harris Flower Farm Elgin County on YouTube.

Reach out to photographers early to let them know your plans, and definitely consider trading professional family/promo photos for the cost of their session.

When the field is in full bloom and it's a warm summer night, go out at golden hour, stand in the field and really breathe in the amazingness around you.

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Mary Aden, Mary Aden Studio, Marietta, GA
 Rachel Aguilar, Trenton, FL
 Kelly Alecci, Blackland Blooms, Red Rock, TX
 Arica Allen, Cold Creek Flower Farm, Smithfield, UT
 Brooke Allen, Connellsville, PA
 Karson Anderson, Petal and Joy Flower Farm, Mattawan, MI
 Torrie Anderson, The Flower Farm at Young's Mill,
 Newport News, VA
 Brenda Andes, Bee & Co., Rayville, MO
 Janet Andoe, Cake Flower Farm, Santa Rosa, CA
 Laurel Appleton Griffin, Griffin Fields, Lowell, VT
 Jennifer Arrington, Pinnacle Farms, Waynesville, NC
 Loren Atkins, Pleasant Valley Flowers, Fort Edward, NY
 Abigale Baldwin, Foxtail Flower Farm, Brooklyn, MI
 Sarah Ballenger, Abundant Grace Flowers, Ethelsville, AL
 Cathy Balmer, Cobourg, ON
 Breah Banks, Greener Partners, Upper Darby, PA
 Andrea Bannister, Backyard Bloomery, Dundas, ON
 Susan Barden, Coastal Garden, Belville, NC
 Kaaren Barlow, Farm to Fist, Hammond, WI
 Deidra Barnes, Old Glory Acres, Douglas, AL
 Robyn Basnett, Horseshoe Valley Farm, Dooralong, NSW, AUST
 Guenette Bautz, Back Roads Ranch, Middle Lake, SK
 Cherlyn Beachy, Red Rooster Ranch Market, St. Ansgar, IA
 Diane Beatty, Greenlight Acres, Ridott, IL
 Marie-Josée Benoit, Riviere Rouge, QB
 Roxanne Bohman, Flowers! by Roxanne, Moscow, ID
 Tracy Bradley, Cross Roots Farm, Royse City, TX
 Ksana Broadwell, Trumansburg, NY
 Ty Brooks, Lazy Summer Farm, Athens, GA
 Michele Brown, Brown Hill Farms, Tunkhannock, PA
 Merry Buchanan, Bella Fiori Farm, Guthrie, OK
 Adele Bueno, Feather Hill, Valatie, NY
 Sasha Bugler, Sweet Piedmont Flowers, Dickerson, MD
 LeAnn Bullard, Ashland, MO
 Yolanda Burrell, Pollinate Farm & Garden, Oakland, CA
 Mary Cain, Willow Creek Flowers, Blountville, TN
 Jen Campbell, Woolly Bee Farm, Wamego, KS
 Lucy Cappiello, Hamilton, ON
 Jaclyn Capwell, Bursting with Blooms, Inc., Indian Trail, NC
 Elyse Carter, Fig and Otter Farm, Nordland, WA
 Amy Carwile, Archlynn Farm, Charlotte Courthouse, VA
 Roz Chandler, Field Gate Flowers, Lathbury, Bucks, UK
 Lea Chapman, Rainbow Ridge Flower Farm, West Lebanon, NH
 Kaley Charlet, Colline Flowers, Paso Robles, CA
 Kelley Chase, Conklin, MI
 Nicole Chilson, Texian Belle Farm, Blue Ridge, TX
 Ryann Clardy, Creek Haven Farm, Pottstown, PA
 Fred Clark, Woodbury, CT
 Meg Clawson, Misadventures Farm, Mantachie, MS
 Amanda Cleland, 81 Petals, Listowel, ON
 Kaye Clothiaux, Gold Hill 1840 Farm, Auburn, AL

Julie Clougherty, Okalee Flower Farm, Ithaca, NY
 Amanda Coburn, Dahling Blooms Flower Co., Bonfield, IL
 Kerri Coleman, Dollhouse Blooms, Attleboro, MA
 Kristine Cook, Late Harvest Farms, Palo, IA
 Brea Corrigan, Rural Route 3 Farm, Plymouth, IL
 Denise Courter, Courter Country Farm, Poulsbo, WA
 Jennifer Cowley, Daisy and Bird Floral Farm, Regina, SK
 Beth Cox, Clyde, NC
 Melinda Creed, Moonstruck Gardens, Clinton, WA
 Sandra Crockett, First Class Flowers, Richey, MT
 Elizabeth Culter, Everlane Flower Co., Bath, NC
 Eileen Curinga, Paradise Flower Farm, Hampstead, NC
 Victoria Czech, Flores de Victoria, Richfield Springs, NY
 Michelle Daigneault, Red Jay Flowers, Coldchester, CT
 Yvonne and Jeff Davis, Davis Square Garden, Evans, GA
 Jenn DeBarge Goonan, Cheers to Flowers, Milton, MA
 Paul DePeal, Saint Joseph, MI
 Deanna Depew, Dees Flower Farm, Vandalia, IL
 Carol deSousa, Pompano Beach, FL
 Wendy Dixon, Crossfield, AB
 Teri Dodson, Flock and Field, Hurst, TX
 Alyssa Dogeagle, Brainerd, MN
 Brittany Doyle, Prince Frederick, MD
 Christina Dreise, Blackwell Bees & Co., Sarnia, ON
 Marilyn Edmison-Driedger, The Herbal Touch, Otterville, ON
 Patty Eisenhaur, Black Dog Market Garden,
 South Londonderry, VT
 Nicole Enman, Cress & Petal Flower Co., Norfolk, MA
 Melissa Erickson, Wild Honey Flowers, Colbert, WA
 Amy Estell, Estell Gardens, Brunswick, MD
 Genevieve Fairchild, Springfield, OR
 Mark Farmer, Single Tree Flower Farm, Cottdale, AL
 Brianna Faust, Back Forty Flower Farm, Long Prairie, MN
 William Fenton, Ethel's Back Yard, Swarthmore, PA
 Kristina Fillback, Flora Place Flower Farm, Collinsville, IL
 Deb Fisher, Deb's Flower Farm, Julian, PA
 Sarah Fisher, The Village Flower Farm, Yellow Springs, OH
 Tina Floyd, Floyd Farm, Kingsburg, CA
 Isabelle Forgues, Ferme Florae, Shawinigan, QC
 Abby Forrest, Florrest Flower Farm, Joplin, MO
 Dawn Foust, Foust Farm, Lester Prairie, MN
 Thomas Fox, One Fox Farm, Aiken, SC
 Ryan Frost, Florosophie Farms, Urbana, IL
 Stella Gaeta, Fresno, CA
 Claude Gauthier, Floriculture Gauthier Inc., Trois-Rivieres, QC
 Marie-Odile Gauvreau, Boisbriand, QC
 Christina George, Parc-Y-Brain Farm, Pontypool,
 Monmouthshire, UK
 Linda Geronilla, A SC Coastal Sustainable Homestead,
 Johns Island, SC
 Kathleen Gingerich, The Farm at Henderson Hill,
 Kensington, OH

Payten Glover, The Floral Expanse
Flower Farm, Bailey, NC

Kathryn Gormandy, P & K Farms,
Elberta, AL

Carolina Gough, Glenview, IL
Stephanie Graham, Graham Acre
Flowers, Eskridge, KS

Kim Graver, Chesapeake, VA

Jacqueline Greenham, Chalfont St Giles,
Bucks, UK

Ingrid Greger, Ingrid's Farm,
Portland, OR

Trish Gustafson, Asters & Artifacts,
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Anna Guziak, Gold Fern Farm,
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Melissa Hagel, Wild Peony,
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Flower Farm, Gloucester, VA

Jen Hanson, Grandflower Farm,
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Kathy Hanson, Fairendale Farms,
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Rachel Harding, Wet Knot Farms,
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Christa Harrison, Flowers on Quince,
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Heather Headley, Ridgewood Farmstead,
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Sherry Hebert, Dooryard Flowers,
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Linda Henke, H.E.R. Blossoms Flower
Farm, West College Corner, IN

May Heriza, Bozeman, MT

Dana Hicks, Black Dog Meadows
Flower Farm, Hudson, MI

Tosha Holland, Swan Valley, ID

Nicole Hoonhorst, Walters Gardens,
Zeeland, MI

Elizabeth Horan, Cold Creek Flowers,
Clear Creek, CA

Jennifer Horgan, Lansdale, PA

Sarah Hoyt, Georgetown, TX

Morgan Hurd, Orient, OH

Krissy James, Clear Spring, MD

Michele Jensen, La Flor Farm, Bellevue, WA

Ashley Johnson, Harvest Farm, Elizabethton, TN

Alana Karam, Cascade Vine and Branch, Creswell, OR

Jenelle Kauffman, Olivia's Flower Truck, New Providence, PA

Latachia Kinslow-Hunt, Tosh's Urban Garden, Jacksonville, FL

Fallon Kipp, Revival Flower Farm, Concord, CA

Vanessa Kuemmerle, Stony Brook Farms, Lovell, ME

Amanda Land, Bethalto, IL

Brian Lapinski, Down to Earth Farm, Jacksonville, FL

Stacey Laschen, Sweet Es Flowers, North Barrington, IL

Matthew LaVergne, Black Moon Hollow Flower Farm,
Charlton, MA

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Tammy Lewis, Flannigan Creek Flower Farm, Viola, ID

Kate Livengood, Witch Hazel Farm, Cumberland, MD

Yazmin Lomeli, Gallup Homestead, Blue Lake, CA

Marlene Lund, M&E Gardens, Mohnton, PA

Crystal Lynch, Woodland Spirit Flowers, Salisbury, NC

Robyn Lynch, Flower Moon Patch, Monroe, NC

Britt Magley, Barrett Fields & Flowers, Enumclaw, WA

Kristen Maness, Roots of Truth Farm, Morrilton, AR

Michelle Manning, Mindful Knotting, Solana Beach, CA

Elizabeth Marchese, Waxahachie, TX

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members (continued)

Kristen Maring, Here to There Farm, Olympia, WA
Rebecca Marrall, Bellingham, WA
Rachel Mayes, Fisher River Flower Farm, Lowgap, NC
Amanda McAllister, Five Acres Flower Farm, Abbotsford, BC
Addie McCaul, Tanglewood Flower Farm, Baltimore, MD
Bridgett McDonald, Brandon, MS
Hope Mckalip, Little Fox Flower, Upperville, VA
Bridget McMillion, Red Handle Farm, Amelia Court House, VA
Cornelia McNamara, Cornelia McNamara Flowers, Chicago, IL
Amy Melena, Solidarity Urban Farms, Lakewood, OH
Antonio Mendoza, Twins Flower Farm, Vista, CA
Melissa Miller, Kore Coffee and Flower, Allentown, PA
Heather Moran, Heirloom Heather, Oshawa, ON
Chelsea Nelson, Holographic Farms, North East, PA
Angela Neufeld, Kingfisher Farm Market, Surrey, BC
Kimberly Norman, Heritage Acres Family Farm, Springfield, OH
Holly Norton, Tehachapi, CA
Alicia O'Hara, Coastal Blooms, Alma, NB
Adrian Odle, Creekside Meadows, Spencerville, IN
Ana Ohlmann, Mission Blooms, Traverse City, MI
Dana Ouellette, Two Sparrows Farm, Berkshire, NY
Laura Oyler, Taylorville, IL
Karen Palaitis, Abril Farms, Maplewood, NJ
Bonnie Paradies, Green Bay, WI
Karen Parker Feld, Crows' Feet Farm, Kensington, NH
Shannon Pawlikowski, Groundhog River Road, Fauquier, ON
Kimberly Paynter, Philadelphia, PA
Stephen Peacock, Olney Springs, CO
Martine Pelletier, Victoriaville, QB
Kylee Pennay, Glass Heart Art, Raytown, MO
Grace Penner, Old Strathnairn Farm, Meaford, ON
Jaclyn Perovich, Gray's Bouquets, Round Hill, VA
Linda Perry, Gardenfire Farm, Englewood, OH
Jesalyn Pettigrew, Mossy Gate Flower Farm, Mount Vernon, WA
Amy Phipps, Westwind Flower Farm, Cincinnati, OH
Sarah Phipps, Mountain Field Farm, Palmer, AK
Molly Pierce, Farmhouse Roots, Roswell, NM
Grayson Pittard, Halden Garden, Salt Lake City, UT
Patricia Poulin, Dirty Boot Farm, Flagstaff, AZ
Heather Provencio, Saving Grace Flower Farm, Wagram, NC
Jessica Purks, Root to Rise Market Garden, Middletown, MD
Sara Rangel, Smokey Ridge, Placerville, CA
Lindsay Rassmann, June and Jane Flower Co., Cambridge, MN
Erlena Redd, Mountain Field Farm, Palmer, AK
Amy Reinke, A + H Urban Farm, Oklahoma City, OK
Roni Reisenburg, Reisenburg Ranch, Aurora, CO
Cynthia Rieger, Barn Yard Blooms, St. Thomas, ON
Sara Rippe, SR Pumpkin and Flower Farm, Yutan, NE
Lynette Roberts, Burlap N Buds, Weiser, ID
Theresa Rogers, Amazing Grace Gardens, High Spring, FL
Julia Rogers, Blackberry Ridge Farm, Huntersville, NC
Melissa Rojas, Full Hands Farm, South Hadley, MA
Eric Rooney, Half Moon Farm, Lakewood, CO
Natalie Rumph, The Wildwood Flower, Charleston, SC
Brionna and Krista Ryder, Remember the Flowers Farm, West Fulton, NY

Amber Saldana, Cold Creek Farm TN, Ripley, TN
Kelly Savas, Piedmont, OK
Rebecca Schenck, Bee Wild Blooms, Schenectady, NY
Melissa Schock, West Luck Blooms, Benton, AR
Tabitha Sebastino, Forest Ridge Farmstead, Warners, NY
Kristine Selleck, Sandy Flats Farm, Middleville, MI
Camilla Sexton, Ruby Jewel Flowers, Show Low, AZ
Eric Sharp, Seven Springs Farm Supply, Check, VA
Taylor Shaw, Litchfield, CT
Jenny Shepler, Jenny's Gardens, Mount Pleasant, PA
Marirose Shields, Frederic, WI
Natan Shiloni, LI Flower Power, Medford, NY
Sarah Shumaker, Carolina Blooms of Blanch, Blanch, NC
Michelle Simpson, The Posie Shoppe, Powell Butte, OR
Lorri Skelton, Wild Honey Flowers, Chattaroy, WA
Heidi Skievaski, Sublime Gardens, Snohomish, WA
Tammy Smith, Red Bird Alley Flower Farm, Palestine, TX
Harriet Smithson, Cumberland Flower Farm, Workington, Cumbria, UK
Kristin Smock, The Bumbling Bee Flower Farm, Albion, PA
Jessica Snobelen, Snobelen Homestead, Kent Bridge, ON
Nadia Spatz, Healthy Flavors, Inc., Eagleville, TN
Kelly Steed, Happy Destiny Farm, Conway, AR
Barb Svoboda, Barb's Backyard Blooms, Belair, MD
Virginia Terry, White Walnut Flower Farm, Westerville, OH
Jac and Trudie Theelen, Tulip Farm Red Deer, Red Deer County, AB
Megan Thomas, San Juan Capistrano, CA
Rochelle and Mike Thomas, Wilde Blue Yonder, Rose Prairie, BC
Christa Thompson, Mountain Field Farm, Palmer, AK
Bettina Tierney, Lily Valley Acres, Thompsons Station, TN
Xandra van der Geer, Red Sands Floral Farm, Glenfinnan, PEI
Colin Van Geest, Pump House Gardens, Beamsville, ON
Kristin Van Vliet, DayMoon Gardens, Dexter, MI
Mary Vargo, Clemson Cooperative Extension, Greenville, SC
Lindsey Vermeulen, Vermeulen Flower Farm, Canning, NS
Aaron Vonasek, 4 Kids and a Farm, Wilton, CA
Donna Wagner, Sycamore Lane Flower Farm, Hegins, PA
Katherine Walters, Peck + Petal Farm, Mena, AR
Kellie Webb, North Ogden Flower Farm, North Ogden, UT
Annicka Weber, NovaJames Homegrown, Somerville, TN
Jennifer Weltz Horpedahl, River Road Flowers, Benton City, WA
Jill Wenger, Kalamazoo, MI
Becky Werra, Whiskey Bend Farm, Hebron, IL
Jess Wesley, Curly Girl Gardens, Seattle, WA
Kristen Wheeler, Farm to Florist, Norfolk, VA
David White, Flat River Farm, Timberlake, NC
Johanna Willingham, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME
Deborah Wilson, Bloom 37 Flower Farm, Greenwood, IN
Rene and Eric Wingerson, The Flower Farm, Blackfoot, ID
Melissa Young, Hillside Flowers, Roanoke, VA
Nancy Zadoff, Wild Petals Bend, Bend, OR
Anna Zajacs, Gardiner dba Le Pommier, St. Charles, IL
Marisa Zer, Westport Flower Garden, Westport, CT

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The Only Publication of its Kind

The Cut Flower Quarterly is uploaded to Members Only as soon as it is finished and then will arrive in your mailbox 2-3 weeks later. Please keep the office informed of any changes to your address or problems receiving this important benefit.

Stay Informed

Our emailed newsletter, *Short Cuts*, designed to keep you informed about your association and industry news, will arrive monthly. Be sure to check your spam and mark "not spam" if you find it there.

Learn and Grow

Attend **ASCFG Events** to discover the many opportunities to learn new growing tips and techniques along with other growers with the same passion – cut flowers!

Make Connections

Reach out to other members in your Region. Use the map at localflowers.org or the directory in Members Only to find fellow members near you. Growers are very busy, especially at the peak of their seasons, and their availability will vary from member to member. Suggest that you spend time at one another's farm to learn and share, or perhaps offer to work with a more experienced member for a day in exchange for the opportunity see their operation firsthand. Form a small group in your Region willing to check in on occasion for a casual meeting by phone, online, or in person.

ASCFG Member Facebook Group

www.facebook.com/groups/ascfgmembersonly

The ASCFG Member Facebook Group is one of the most valuable services of your membership, and we feel sure you will benefit from reading and participating in the discussions shared here.

If you are not already included in the group, it's easy to join! Navigate by entering "ASCFG Members Only" in the Facebook search bar and request to join. Please note: business profiles will not be accepted. If your individual profile name does not match the name we have for you on file, please let us know.

Opinions expressed by ASCFG members on these pages or in recorded material do not necessarily reflect those of the ASCFG, its Board of Directors, or staff. The use of brand names, and any mention or listing of commercial products or services on this site does not imply endorsement by the ASCFG, nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.

We are fortunate that our members are so generous with their knowledge, and thankful that since the group's inception, discourse has been respectful and honest. However, in the very limited chance that a discussion may include offensive material or unauthorized advertising, the Admins of the group will quickly take action.

Please read—and follow—these guidelines about the standards of acceptable behavior:

- The page is available only to current ASCFG members; lapsed members are automatically removed.
- When posting on this platform, please use the same courtesy we hope you would exhibit when speaking in person to someone. Racist, discriminatory, homophobic, transphobic, and personal insults or attacks will not be tolerated. The posts will be removed and evaluated by the Admins. If necessary, the author will be notified that she or he is banned from the group. Further action will be determined by the Admins and the ASCFG Board of Directors.
- Please keep in mind that this is a forum for cut flower farmers and allied businesses, and align your messages to relevant topics about cut flower growing and marketing.
- Before you ask a question or post a response, do a little research. Perhaps someone has already asked or answered the same question earlier. Use the Search function to look for a keyword. The archives for this page are immense.
- Bear in mind that what you write will be read far and wide. Don't write anything that is libelous or could otherwise cause a liability issue for the Association. Even comments that are not libelous can be unfair, and can do significant and long-lasting damage. Don't take complaints about suppliers to the page without first being certain of your facts. If you got one poor shipment of plants, don't write that the supplier is bad. Don't spread gossip, as in "I heard they declared bankruptcy." These rules about fairness and validation don't preclude the very valuable exchange of information about bad suppliers or buyers.

Advertising Policy:

- This page is not intended to be an advertising venue for suppliers, except for those contracted through the ASCFG Virtual Advertising system. For example, don't post your price list or availability list. However, if you read that someone is looking for a service or product you supply, you are encouraged to respond to that person privately with your information. Growers may, however, offer the occasional notice that they have something for sale: a piece of equipment or an abundance of dried statice, for example.
- Members may not promote their own workshops or meetings, or those of other organizations. Please contact the ASCFG office to make a request if you have found an event you think the Board should consider sharing with the Membership.

Farm Tours Bring Growers Together

Judy M. Laushman



Now that true winter has finally arrived here on the North Coast, it's a pleasure to imagine a personalized tour of a lush cut flower farm in the middle of the growing season. We especially miss that feature of in-person conferences. Speaker sessions are invaluable, and trade shows provide essential connections with suppliers, but even if it meant a few hours on a bus, watching people tumble excitedly off the coach with their cameras poised and notebooks at the ready was a true treat.

Considering the vagaries of the ongoing pandemic, it's unlikely we'll be able to produce a completely in-person education event like our past National Conferences in 2022. However, given the success and popularity of the nine Farm Tours the ASCFG hosted in 2021, it seems clear we have a happy alternative.



Last year, 340 members attended these events. Not only were participants pleased with the experience, the hosts were happy they had opened their farm gates to fellow members. Even though they had to put in some work to organize their staff for efficient organization, most told us that having other growers on their farms realized how much they had also missed that interaction.

Please watch for news of more of these Farm Tours, and let us know if you would like to join the ranks of hosts for 2022.

If you're thinking about opening your cut flower business to paying visitors, this issue of the *Quarterly* covers about as much as you need to know for safe and successful events. Julie Martens Forney interviewed members from across the country and Canada, to learn what has worked—and sometimes didn't—for them.

Some of the most important insights came from Gretchen Langston, of Blooms, whose cut flower farm is in north-central Colorado. Gretchen has years of experience in risk management, and made clear the importance of having in place the right kind of insurance when the public is on your land.

Those aren't plans anyone relishes making, but Gretchen's warning "This is what protects you as a farmer when someone trips over an electrical cord and breaks their hip. It sounds ridiculous until it's not, and then it's a catastrophe." is spot on.

Keep these recommendations in mind while you're looking at the calendar, and your markets, to see when might be best for you to host your own "wow" moments.





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